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THEOLOGY & PHILOSOPHY

Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide,
In thy most need to go by thy side

THOMAS À KEMPIS, born *c.* 1380 at Kempen, in the Rhineland. His surname was Hemerken. In 1399 was admitted to the Augustinian monastery of St Agnes at Zwolle and took the vows in 1406. He died in 1471.

Imitatio Christi. English.

THOMAS À KEMPIS

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

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LIFE OF
THOMAS À KEMPIS

THOMAS À KEMPIS was born *c.* 1380, at Kempen, a village situated in the Rhineland. His surname was Hemerken, or 'Little Hammer,' translated into the word *Malleolus* by his Latin biographers. His parents were of low condition; they were highly respected for their piety.

When he attained his sixth year, he was placed in one of the houses belonging to the Society of Brothers and Sisters of Common Life. It is remarkable that, in one of the schools of this society, Erasmus received his first rudiments of learning.

The school in which Thomas à Kempis entered himself, was in the town of Deventer, in West-Friesland, where Florentius, the immediate successor of Gerard de Groote, the founder of the society, was vicar of the principal church.

When he attained his nineteenth year, Thomas à Kempis determined on entering into the Order of Saint Augustine. Tradition deduces that order from the celebrated doctor of the Church of that name. Till the eleventh century, the monks of Saint Augustine seem to have been little more than a voluntary association of ecclesiastics: about that time they were fixed in a permanent order. They exercised a variety of ecclesiastical functions, and their public schools for instruction of youth were particularly esteemed. Florentius encouraged Thomas à Kempis in his resolution to enter among them. He continued a novice during five years.

From the time of his profession till his decease, a period of sixty-six years, Thomas à Kempis remained in the monastery of Zwolle, and in the continual practice of every virtue of his state.

He was successively promoted to the office of Bursar, Master of Novices, and Sub-prior.

By degrees, his reputation for virtue and piety got abroad. Many persons in the neighbourhood of the monastery wished to place themselves under his spiritual direction; and numbers sought his pious and edifying conversation. But he avoided their visits, as much as it was in his power. At the first moment

that Christian civility allowed, he took leave of company, saying, 'that he must leave them as one was waiting for him in his cell.' What passed between him and the visitant of his cell, he himself has described, as far as language can describe it, in the twenty-first chapter of the third book of 'The Imitation.' Every such hour was dearer to him than the last. 'I have sought for rest everywhere,' he said toward the close of his life, 'but I have found it nowhere except in a little corner, with a little book.'

He died on the 25th of July, in the year 1471, in the ninetieth year of his age. He is described to have been of small stature, well proportioned, and to have had a piercing eye. His body was discovered in 1672.

BOOK FIRST

CHAPTER I

Of the Imitation of Christ and the Contempt of all the Vanities of the World

HE that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, saith the Lord.

These are the words of Christ, whereby we are admonished how we must imitate His life and conversation if we would be truly enlightened and delivered from all blindness of heart.

Let it, then, be our chief study to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ.

2. The teaching of Christ surpasseth all the teachings of the Saints; and he that hath His Spirit will find therein a hidden manna.

But it happeneth that many, from the frequent hearing of the Gospel, feel little emotion, because they have not the Spirit of Christ.

But he that would fully and with relish understand the words of Christ, must study to conform his whole life to Him.

3. What doth it profit thee to dispute deeply about the Trinity, if thou be wanting in humility, and so be displeasing to the Trinity?

In truth, sublime words make not a saint and a just man; but it is a virtuous life that maketh one dear to God.

I would rather feel compunction, than know how to define it.

If thou didst know the whole Bible outwardly, and the sayings of all the philosophers, what would it all profit thee without charity and the grace of God?

Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, but to love God and serve Him alone.

This is the highest wisdom, by despising the world, to make progress towards the kingdom of heaven.

4. It is vanity, therefore, to seek perishing riches, and to trust in them.

Vanity, also it is, to court honours, and to lift up one's self on high.

Vanity is it to follow the desires of the flesh, and to desire that for which hereafter there must be a heavy penalty.

Vanity is it to wish a long life, and take but little pains about a good life.

Vanity is it to attend only to the present life, and not to look forward to the things that are to come.

It is vanity to love what is passing away with all speed, and not to be hastening thither where endless joy abideth.

5. Oftentimes call to mind the proverb: The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing.

Study, therefore, to wean thy heart from love of visible things, and to betake thee to the things unseen; for they that follow the pleasures of their senses, sully their conscience and lose the grace of God.

Chapter II

Of having an Humble Opinion of Oneself

Every man naturally desireth to know; but what doth knowledge avail without the fear of God?

Truly, a lowly rustic that serveth God is better than a proud philosopher who pondereth the courses of the stars, and neglecteth himself.

He that knoweth himself becometh vile to himself, and taketh no delight in the praises of men.

If I knew all things that are in the world, and were not in charity, what would it profit me in the sight of God, who will judge according to deeds?

2. Cease from overweening desire of knowledge; because many distractions are found there, and much delusion.

Learned men are very willing to seem wise, and to be called so.

Many are the things which it is of little or no profit to the soul to know.

And he is very unwise who attendeth more earnestly to other things than to those which may serve for his salvation.

Many words do not satisfy the soul; but a good life giveth ease to the mind, and a pure conscience affordeth great confidence towards God.

3. The more thou knowest, and the better, so much the heavier will thy judgment therefore be, unless thy life be also more holy.

Be not, then, lifted up for any skill or learning thou hast; but rather fear for the knowledge that is given thee.

If it seem to thee that thou knowest many things, and understandest them well enough, know for all that the things thou art ignorant of are still more.

Be not high-minded, but rather acknowledge thine ignorance.

Why wouldst thou prefer thyself to another, when there may be found many more learned and better versed in the Law than thou?

If thou wouldst acquire knowledge and learn anything to the purpose, love to be unknown, and to be esteemed as nothing.

4. The highest and most useful lesson we can learn is this: To know truly and to look down upon ourselves.

To think nothing of ourselves, and always to judge well and highly of others, is great wisdom and high perfection.

If thou shouldst see another openly do wrong, or commit some grievous sins, thou needest not think thyself better; for thou knowest not how long thou mayest be able to persevere in well-doing.

We are all frail; but see thou think none more frail than thyself.

Chapter III

Of the Doctrine of Truth

Happy is he whom truth teacheth by itself, not by figures and passing sounds, but as it is in itself.

Our own way of thinking and our sense often deceive us, and see but a little way.

What signifies making a great dispute about hidden and obscure things which we shall not be reproved in the judgment for having been ignorant of?

Wonderful folly! that, neglecting the things that are useful and necessary, we give our attention unbidden to such as are curious and mischievous! Having eyes, we see not.

2. And what matter is it to us of *genera* and *species*? He to whom the Eternal Word speaketh is delivered from a multitude of opinions.

From the One Word are all things, and all things speak this One; and this is the Beginning which also speaketh to us.

Without Him no man understandeth, or rightly judgeth.

He to whom all things are one, who referreth all things to one, and seeth all things in one, may be steadfast in heart, and abide in God at peace.

O Truth! my God! make me one with Thee in everlasting charity.

I am oftentimes wearied with the many things I read and hear; in Thee is all I wish or long for.

Let all teachers hold their peace, and all created things keep silence in Thy presence; do Thou alone speak to me.

3. The more a man is united within himself, and interiorly simple, so much the more and deeper things doth he understand without labour, for he receiveth the light of understanding from on high.

A pure, simple, and steadfast spirit is not distracted by the multitude of things he hath to do; for he doeth all for the honour of God, and striveth within himself to be free from all self-seeking.

Who doth more hinder thee, and give thee more trouble than thine own heart's unmortified affection?

A good and devout man first arrangeth interiorly the works he hath to do exteriorly; and they lead him not to the desires of an evil inclination, but he bendeth them to the judgment of right reason.

Who hath a stronger conflict than he who striveth to overcome himself?

And this ought to be our business, namely: to overcome ourselves; and every day to get more the mastery over ourselves; and to make progress for the better.

4. All perfection in this life is attended by some imperfection, and all our far-seeing is not without a certain obscurity.

The humble knowledge of oneself is a surer way to God than deep researches after science.

Knowledge is not to be blamed, nor simple acquaintance with things, good in itself and ordained by God; but a good conscience and a virtuous life are always to be preferred.

But because many take more pains to be learned than to lead good lives, therefore they often go astray, and bear no fruit at all, or but little.

5. Oh, if men would be as diligent in the rooting out of vices and grafting in of virtues as they are in mooting questions, there would not be so many evils and scandals among the people, nor such laxity in monasteries!

Truly, when the day of judgment cometh, it will not be asked of us what we have read, but what we have done; not what fine discourses we have made, but how like religious we have lived.

Tell me where now are all those doctors and masters with whom thou wast well acquainted while they were yet alive and in the glory of their learning?

Others now hold their preferments, and I know not whether they ever think of them.

In their lifetime they seemed to be something, and now they are not spoken of.

6. Oh, how quickly passeth away the glory of the world! Oh, that their life had been in keeping with their learning! then would they have studied and lectured to good purpose.

How many who take little care in serving God, are ruined through vain learning in the world.

And because they love rather to be great than humble, therefore they are lost in their own imaginings.

He is truly great who hath great charity.

He is truly great who is little in his own eyes, and counteth for nothing all the heights of honour.

He is truly prudent who esteemeth all earthly things as dung, that he may win Christ.

And he is truly most learned who doth the will of God and forsaketh his own will.

Chapter IV

Of Prudence in what We do

We must not trust every word or impulse, but cautiously and patiently weigh the matter according to God.

Alas! oftentimes is evil more readily believed and spoken of another than good; so weak are we.

But perfect men do not easily believe every tale-teller; for they know human weakness is prone to evil, and very apt to slip in speech.

2. It is great wisdom not to be rash in what is to be done, and not to persist obstinately in our own opinions.

It is a part of this wisdom, also, not to believe everything men say, nor straightway to pour into the ears of others what we have heard or believed.

Take counsel of a wise and conscientious man, and seek rather to be instructed by one that is better, than to follow thy own inventions.

A good life maketh a man wise according to God, and giveth great experience.

The more humble any one is in heart, and the more in subjection to God, so much the wiser will he be in all things, and the more at peace.

Chapter V

Of Reading the Holy Scriptures

TRUTH is to be sought in the holy Scriptures; not eloquence. All holy Scripture should be read in the spirit in which it was written.

We should seek profit in the Scriptures rather than subtlety of speech.

We ought to read devout and simple books as willingly as those that are high and profound.

Let not the authority of the author be in thy way, whether he be of little or great learning; but let love of simple truth lead thee to read.

Inquire not who may have said a thing, but consider what is said.

2. Men pass away, but the truth of the Lord abideth forever.

God speaketh to us in divers ways, without respect of persons.

Our curiosity is often a hindrance to us in reading the Scriptures, when we wish to understand and to discuss where we ought to pass on in simplicity.

If thou wilt derive profit, read with humility, with simplicity, and with faith; and never wish to have the name of learning.

Be fond of inquiring, and listen in silence to the words of the Saints; and let not the parables of the ancients be displeasing to thee, for they are not uttered without a cause.

Chapter VI

Of Inordinate Affections

Whenever a man desireth any thing inordinately, straightway he is disquieted within himself.

The proud and the covetous are never at rest; the poor and humble in spirit pass their life in abundance of peace.

The man who is not yet perfectly dead to self is soon tempted and overcome in little and paltry things.

He that is weak in spirit, and in a certain manner as yet carnal, and inclined to things of sense, cannot without difficulty sever himself wholly from earthly desires.

And therefore he is often sad when he does withdraw himself; and besides, he is easily moved to anger if anyone thwarts him.

2. And, if he have pursued his inclination, forthwith he is burdened with remorse of conscience for having gone after his passion, which helpeth him not at all to the peace he looked for.

It is by resisting the passions therefore, and not by serving them, that true peace of heart is to be found.

Peace, therefore, is not in the heart of the carnal man, nor in the man who is devoted to outward things, but in the fervent and spiritual man.

Chapter VII

Of Avoiding Vain Hope and Arrogance

He is a vain man that putteth his hope in man, or in things created.

Be not ashamed to wait on others for the love of Jesus Christ, and to be looked upon as poor in this world.

Depend not upon thyself, but place thy hope in God.

Do what thou canst, and God will be with thy good will.

Trust not in thine own knowledge, nor in the cunning of any man living, but rather in the grace of God, who helpeth the humble, and humbleth them that presume upon themselves.

2. Glory not in riches, if thou have them, nor in friends because they are powerful; but in God, who giveth all things, and desireth to give Himself above all things.

Boast not thyself of thy stature or beauty of body, which with a little sickness is spoiled and disfigured.

Be not proud of thy abilities or thy talents, lest thou offend God, to whom appertaineth whatever good thou mayest naturally have.

3. Esteem not thyself better than others, lest, perhaps, thou be accounted worse in the sight of God, who knoweth what is in man.

Be not proud of thy own good words; for the judgments of God are other than those of men; and what pleaseth men oftentimes displeaseth Him.

If thou have any good in thee, believe still better things of others, that thou mayest preserve humility.

It will do thee no harm to put thyself below everybody, but it will hurt thee very much to put thyself before anyone.

Continual peace dwelleth with the humble; but in the heart of the proud is frequent envy and indignation.

Chapter VIII

Of Guarding against too much Intimacy

Open not thy heart to every man, but discuss thy business with one that is wise and feareth God.

Be rarely with young people and strangers.

Fawn not upon the rich, be not fond of appearing in the presence of the great.

Keep company with the humble and the simple, with the devout and well-ordered; and converse of such things as are edifying.

Be not an intimate of any woman; but in general commend all good women unto God.

Desire to be intimate only with God and His holy angels; and shun the acquaintance of men.

We should have charity towards all men; but intimacy is not expedient.

It happeneth sometimes that a person while unknown shineth highly in good report, but whose presence offendeth the eyes of them that see him.

Sometimes we think to please others with our company; and we begin rather to be displeasing to them from the bad qualities they discover in us.

Chapter IX

Of Obedience and Subjection

It is a very great thing to be settled in obedience, to live under a superior, and not to be one's own master.

It is much safer to be in subjection than in authority.

Many are under obedience, more out of necessity than charity; and such have suffering and are apt to murmur.

Neither will they acquire liberty of mind, unless they submit themselves with their whole heart for God's sake.

Run hither or thither, thou wilt find no rest but in humble subjection under the government of a superior.

A fancy for places and changing of residence hath deluded many.

2. It is true, everyone is desirous of acting according to his own way of thinking, and is most inclined to such as agree with him in opinion.

But if God is amongst us, we must needs sometimes give up our own opinion for the blessing of peace.

Who is so wise, as to be able fully to know all things?

Be not over-confident therefore in thine own sentiments, but be ready also with pleasure to hear the sentiments of others.

Although thine own opinion be right, yet if for God's sake thou leavest it and followest another man's, thou wilt profit the more by it.

3. For I have often heard that it is safer to listen and to take advice than to give it.

It may also happen that each one's opinion may be right; but to be unwilling to acquiesce in other men's, when reason or occasion requires it, is a sign of pride and obstinacy.

Chapter X

Of Avoiding Superfluity of Words

Fly as much as possible the tumult of men; for the treating of worldly affairs is a great hindrance, even though they be discoursed of with a simple intention. For we are too easily contaminated and ensnared with vanity.

I would that many a time I had kept silence, and not been in company.

Why are we so fond of speaking and of talking idly together, when yet we seldom return to silence without some wound to conscience?

The reason why we are so fond of talking is that we seek consolation from one another by much discoursing together; and we wish to lighten our heart, wearied with various thoughts.

And we are very fond of speaking and thinking of those things we very much love or wish for, or that we feel are a contradiction to us.

2. But, alas, it is often vainly and to no purpose; for this outward consolation is no small hindrance to the interior and divine consolation.

Therefore we must watch and pray, lest the time pass away without fruit.

If thou hast leave to speak, and it is expedient, speak those things that may edify.

Evil custom and negligence about our spiritual advancement contribute much to the unguardedness of our tongue.

But devout conferences upon spiritual things are no small help to spiritual progress—especially when persons of congenial mind and spirit are associated together in God.

Chapter XI

Of Acquiring Peace and Zeal for our Spiritual Progress

We might have much peace, if we would not busy ourselves with the sayings and doings of other people, and with things which concern us not.

How can he long abide in peace who entangleth himself with other people's concerns; who seeketh occasions abroad; who little or seldom recollecteth himself interiorly?

Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall enjoy much peace.

2. What is the reason why some of the Saints were so perfect and contemplative?

Because their whole study was to mortify themselves wholly from all earthly desires; and so they were able to cleave to God with all their inmost heart, and freely to attend to themselves.

But we are too much taken up with our own passions, and too solicitous about transitory things.

Seldom do we perfectly overcome one single fault; nor do we ardently desire to make daily progress; therefore we remain cold and lukewarm.

3. If we were perfectly dead to ourselves and no way involved in earthly pursuits, then we could taste the savour of divine things, and experience something of heavenly contemplation.

The whole hindrance, and a very great one, is that we are not free from passions and lusts, and strive not to walk in the perfect way of the Saints.

When we are met by even a little adversity, we are too soon cast down and seek after human consolation.

4. If we strove like valiant men to stand in the battle, verily we should see the Lord from heaven assisting us.

For He is ready to help them that fight, trusting in His grace; who Himself provideth us occasions to fight, in order that we may overcome.

If we place our religious progress in outward observances only, our devotion will soon come to an end.

But let us lay the axe to the root, that, being purged of passions, we may possess our minds in peace.

5. If every year we rooted out one fault, we should soon become perfect men.

But now we often feel, on the contrary, that we may find ourselves to have been better and more pure in the beginning of our conversion, than after many years of our profession.

Our fervour and progress ought to increase daily; but now it is esteemed a great thing if anyone can retain something of his first fervour.

If we would do ourselves a little violence in the beginning, afterwards we should be able to do all things with ease and joy.

6. It is hard to give up what we are accustomed to, but harder to go contrary to our own will.

But if thou overcome not little and easy things, how wilt thou surmount greater difficulties?

Resist thine inclination in the beginning, and break off evil habits; lest, by little and little, the difficulty increase upon thee.

Oh, if thou didst consider what peace thou wouldst procure for thyself, and what joy for others, by well-doing, I think thou wouldst be more solicitous for thy spiritual progress.

Chapter XII

Of the Advantage of Adversity

It is good for us now and then to have some troubles and adversities; for oftentimes they make a man enter into himself, that he may know that he is an exile, and place not his hopes in anything of the world.

It is good for us sometimes to suffer contradictions, and to allow people to think ill and slightingly of us, even when we do and mean well.

These are often helps to humility, and rid us of vain glory.

For then we more earnestly seek God to be witness of what passes within us, when outwardly we are slighted by men and incur their discredit.

2. Therefore ought a man so firmly to establish himself in God, as to have no need of seeking many human consolations.

When a man of good will is troubled, tempted, or afflicted with evil thoughts, then he best understandeth what need he hath of God, and that without Him he is incapable of any good.

Then also is he sorrowful; he sigheth and prayeth by reason of the miseries he suffereth.

Then is he weary of longer life, and wisheth death to come, that he may be dissolved and be with Christ.

Then also he well perceiveth, that perfect security and full peace cannot be realized in this world.

Chapter XIII

Of Resisting Temptations

As long as we live in this world, we cannot be without tribulation and temptation.

Hence it is written in Job: 'Man's life on earth is a temptation.'

Everyone, therefore, should be solicitous about his temptations, and watch in prayer, lest the devil find opportunity to catch him; who never sleepeth, but goeth about, seeking whom he may devour.

No one is so perfect and holy as not sometimes to have temptations; and we never can be wholly free from them.

2. Nevertheless, temptations are often very profitable to a man, troublesome and grievous though they may be; for in them a man is humbled, purified, and instructed.

All the Saints passed through many tribulations and temptations, and profited by them.

And they that could not support temptations, became reprobate, and fell away.

There is no order so holy, nor place so retired, where there are not temptations or adversities.

3. A man is never wholly secure from temptation as long as he liveth; for there is within us the source of temptation, since we were born in concupiscence.

When one temptation or tribulation is over, another cometh on; and we shall always have something to suffer, for we have lost the advantage of our original happiness.

Many seek to fly temptations, and fall the more grievously into them.

We cannot conquer by flight alone, but by patience and true humility we become stronger than all our enemies.

4. He who only declineth them outwardly, and doth not pluck out their root, will profit little; nay, temptations will the sooner return, and he will find himself in a worse condition.

By degrees and by patience, with longanimity, thou wilt, by God's grace, better overcome them than by harshness and thine own importunity.

Take counsel the oftener in temptation, and do not deal harshly with one who is tempted; but pour in consolation, as thou wouldst wish to be done unto thyself.

5. Inconstancy of mind, and little confidence in God, is the beginning of all evil temptations.

For as a ship without a helm is driven to and fro by the waves, so the man who is negligent, and giveth up his resolution, is tempted in various ways.

Fire trieth iron, and temptation a just man.

We often know not what we are able to do, but temptation discovereth what we are.

Still we must watch, especially in the beginning of temptation; for then the enemy is more easily overcome, if he be not suffered to enter the door of the mind, but is withstood upon the threshold the very moment that he knocketh.

Whence a certain one hath said:

> Resist beginnings; all too late the cure,
> When ills have gathered strength by long delay.

For first there cometh into the mind a simple thought; then a strong imagination; afterwards delight, and the evil motion and consent.

And so, by little and little, the malignant foe doth gain full entrance, when he is not resisted in the beginning.

And the longer anyone hath been slothful in resisting, so much the weaker he daily becometh in himself, and the enemy so much the stronger against him.

6. Some suffer grievous temptations in the beginning of their conversion, others in the end; and some are much troubled nearly their whole life.

Some are very lightly tempted, according to the wisdom and equity of the ordinance of God, who weigheth man's condition and merits, and preordaineth all things for the salvation of His elect.

7. We must not, therefore, despair when we are tempted, but the more fervently pray God to vouchsafe to help us in every tribulation: who of a truth, according to the saying of St Paul, will make such issue with the temptation, that we may be able to sustain it.

Let us, then, humble our souls under the hand of God in every temptation and tribulation; for the humble in spirit He will save and exalt.

8. In temptations and tribulations is it proved what progress a man hath made; and there also is their greater merit, and virtue is made more manifest.

Neither is it a great thing for a man to be devout and fervent while he feeleth no weight of adversity in time of trouble; but if he suffereth patiently, there will be hope of great profit.

Some are preserved from great temptations, and are often overcome in daily little ones; that, thus humbled, they may never presume upon themselves in great trials, when they are so weak in such trifling occurrences.

Chapter XIV

Of Avoiding Rash Judgment

TURN thine eyes back upon thyself, and see thou judge not the doings of others.

In judging others, a man toileth in vain; for the most part he is mistaken, and he easily sinneth; but judging and scrutinizing himself, he always laboureth with profit.

We often judge of a thing according as we have it at heart; for true judgment is easily lost through private affection.

If God were always the only object of our desire, we should not be easily disturbed at our own opinions being resisted.

2. But oftentimes there is something lying hid within, or occurring from without, that draws us along with it.

Many secretly seek themselves in what they do, and are not aware of it.

They seem also to continue in good peace, so long as things are done according to their will and judgment; but if aught happen otherwise than they desire, they are soon disturbed, and become sad.

Too often difference of feelings and opinions giveth rise to dissensions between friends and fellow citizens, between religious and devout persons.

3. An inveterate habit is with difficulty relinquished, and no one is willingly led beyond his own views.

If thou reliest more on thine own reason or industry than on the subduing virtue of Jesus Christ, thou wilt seldom and with difficulty become an enlightened man.

For God willeth us to become perfectly subject to Himself, and by the love that burneth in us to transcend all reason.

Chapter XV

Of Works done out of Charity

Evil ought not be done for anything in the world, nor for the love of any human being; but yet for the benefit of one that is in need, a good work is sometimes freely to be left undone, or rather to be changed for what is better.

For by this means a good work is not lost, but changed into a better.

Without charity, the outward work provideth nothing; but whatever is done out of charity, be it ever so little and contemptible, it is all made fruitful, inasmuch as God regardeth more out of how much love a man doth a work, than how much he doth.

2. He doth much who loveth much.

He doth much who doth well what he hath to do.

He doth well, who regardeth rather the common good than his own will.

Oftentimes that seemeth to be charity which is rather carnality; for natural inclination, self-will, hope of reward, study of our own interests, will seldom be absent.

3. He that hath true and perfect charity, seeketh himself in nothing, but only desireth God to be glorified in all things.

And he envieth no man, for he loveth no joy for himself alone.

Neither doth he desire to rejoice in himself, but wisheth to find his blessedness above all good things in God.

He attributeth nothing of good to any man, but referreth it all to God, from whom, as from their fountain, all things proceed, and in whom, as in their end, all the Saints repose in fruition.

Oh, if one had but a spark of real charity, truly would he feel that all earthly things are full of vanity!

Chapter XVI

Of Bearing the Defects of Others

WHATEVER a man cannot amend in himself or in others, he ought to bear with patiently, until God ordain it otherwise.

Reflect that perhaps it is better so to prove thee and thy patience, without which our merits are little worth.

Nevertheless, it behoveth thee to make supplication under such hindrances, that God would vouchsafe to come and help thee, and that thou mayest be able to bear them in good part.

2. If anyone, once or twice admonished, doth not comply, contend not with him; but leave it all to God, that His will may be done, who knoweth how to turn evil into good, and that He may be honoured in all His servants.

Study to be patient in bearing the defects of others, and their infirmities, be they what they may; for thou hast many things, which others must bear withal.

If thou canst not make thyself what thou wouldst be, how canst thou expect to have another so exactly to thy mind?

We would fain see others perfect, and yet our own faults we amend not.

3. We would have others strictly corrected, and we will not be corrected ourselves.

The large liberty others take displeaseth us and yet we ourselves will not be denied anything we ask for.

We wish others to be kept within the rules, and we ourselves will not bear to be checked ever so little.

And so it is clear how seldom we weigh our neighbour in the same balance with ourselves.

If all were perfect, what then should we have to bear with from others for the love of God?

4. But now God hath thus ordered it, that we may learn to bear one another's burdens; for no one is without a fault, no one but hath a burden; no one is sufficient for himself, no one is wise

enough for himself: but we have to support one another, comfort one another, help, instruct and admonish one another.

But the measure of each man's virtue is best seen in occasions that are adverse.

For the occasions do not make the frailty of a man, but they show what he is.

Chapter XVII

Of the Monastic Life

THOU must learn to beat down self in many things, if thou wouldst live in peace and concord with others.

It is no small thing to dwell in monasteries, or in a congregation, and to live there without complaint, and to persevere faithfully even unto death.

Blessed is he who shall have lived there well, and there happily ended.

If thou wouldst persevere dutifully and advance, look on thyself as an exile and a pilgrim upon earth.

Thou must become a fool for Christ's sake, if thou wishest to lead the life of a religious.

2. The habit and the tonsure make but little alteration; but the moral change and the entire mortification of the passions make a true religious. He that seeketh anything else but simply God and the salvation of his soul, will find nothing but trouble and sorrow.

And he who doth not strive to be the least, and subject to all, cannot long remain in peace.

3. Thou hast come to serve, not to govern; know thy vocation is to suffer and to labour, not to pass thy time in idleness or vain conversation.

Here, therefore, men are tried, as gold is in the furnace.

Here no man can abide, except he be ready with all his heart to humble himself for the love of God.

Chapter XVIII

Of the Examples of the Holy Fathers

Look upon the lively examples of the holy Fathers, in whom shone real perfection and the religious life, and thou wilt see how little it is, and almost nothing, that we do.

Alas, what is our life, if it be compared with theirs!

Saints, and friends of Christ, they served our Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in labour and weariness, in watchings and fastings, in prayers and holy meditations, in frequent persecutions and reproaches.

2. Oh, how many and grievous tribulations did the Apostles suffer, and the Martyrs, and Confessors, and Virgins, and all the rest who resolved to follow the steps of Christ!

For they hated their lives in this world, that they might keep them unto life eternal.

Oh, what a strict and self-renouncing life the holy Fathers of the desert led! what long and grievous temptations did they bear! how often were they harassed by the enemy! what frequent and fervent prayers offered they up to God! what rigorous abstinence did they practise! what great zeal and fervour had they for spiritual progress! what a valiant contest waged they to subdue their imperfections! what purity and straightforwardness of purpose kept they towards God!

By day they laboured, and much of the night they spent in prayer; though while they laboured, they were far from leaving off mental prayer.

3. They spent all their time profitably, every hour seemed short to spend with God; and even their necessary bodily refection was forgotten in the great sweetness of contemplation.

They renounced all riches, dignities, honours, friends, and kindred; they hardly took what was necessary for life: it grieved them to serve the body even in its necessity.

Accordingly, they were poor in earthly things, but very rich in grace and virtues.

Outwardly they suffered want, but within they were refreshed with grace and divine consolation.

4. They were aliens to the world, but they were very near and familiar friends of God.

To themselves they seemed as nothing, and the world despised them; but they were precious and beloved in the eyes of God.

They persevered in true humility, they lived in simple obedience, they walked in charity and patience; and so every day they advanced in spirit, and gained great favour with God.

They were given for an example to all religious, and ought more to excite us to advance in good than the number of the lukewarm induce us to grow remiss.

5. Oh, how great was the fervour of all religious in the beginning of their holy institute!

Oh, how great was their devotion in prayer! how great their zeal for virtue! how vigorous the discipline that was kept up! what reverence and obedience, under the rule of the superior, flourished in all!

Their traces that remain still bear witness that they were truly holy and perfect men who did battle so stoutly, and trampled the world under their feet.

Now he is thought great who is not a transgressor, and who can with patience endure what he hath undertaken.

6. Ah, the lukewarmness and negligence of our state! that we so soon fall away from our first fervour, and are even now tired of life from slothfulness and tepidity.

Oh, that advancement in virtue be not quite asleep in thee, who hast so often seen the manifold examples of the devout!

Chapter XIX

Of the Exercises of a Good Religious

The life of a good religious ought to abound in every virtue: that he may be such inwardly as he seemeth to men outwardly to be.

And with good reason ought he to be much more within than he appears outwardly; for it is God that overseeth us, and we should exceedingly stand in awe of Him, and walk in His sight wherever we may be, as the Angels do, in purity.

Every day we ought to renew our purpose, and stir ourselves up to fervour, as if it were the first day of our conversion.

And to say: Help me, O Lord God, in my good purpose, and in Thy holy service, and grant that I may this day begin indeed, since what I have hitherto done is nothing.

2. As our purpose is, so will our progress be; and there is need of much diligence for him that wisheth to advance much.

And if he, who strongly purposeth, doth yet oftentimes fail, what will he do that seldom or but weakly resolveth?

But the falling off from any good resolution happeneth many ways; and a trifling omission in our exercises hardly passeth over without some loss.

The resolutions of the just depend rather on the grace of God than on their own wisdom; and they always, whatever they take in hand, put their trust in Him.

For man proposeth, but God disposeth; neither is the way of man as he chooseth.

3. If, for piety's sake, or for a brother's benefit, any accustomed exercise be sometimes omitted it can easily be resumed afterwards.

But if it be laid aside lightly, out of weariness of mind or negligence, it is justly blamable, and will be found to do harm.

Let us try as much as we can, we shall still unavoidably fail in many things.

Nevertheless, we should always have some certain resolution, and especially against the things that are our greatest hindrances.

We must alike examine and set in order both our interior and exterior, for both are necessary to our advancement.

4. If thou canst not be continually recollected, at all events be so sometimes, and at least once a day—in the morning, for example, or the evening.

In the morning frame thy purpose; in the evening examine thy conduct—how thou hast behaved to-day in word, deed, and thought; for it may be that in these thou hast many times offended God and thy neighbour.

Gird thyself up like a man to resist the wicked suggestions of the devil; bridle gluttony, and thou wilt the easier bridle every inclination of the flesh.

Never be wholly idle, but either reading or writing, or praying or meditating, or labouring at something for the common good.

Nevertheless, bodily exercises are to be practised with discretion, and not equally to be undertaken by all.

5. Those things which are not common ought not to be done in public; for what is private is more safely practised in secret.

But thou must take care not to be slothful in what is common, and too ready to do what is singular; but when thou hast fully and faithfully fulfilled what is of obligation, and whatever hath been enjoined thee, then, if there be any time left, give thyself to thyself, as thy devotion may lead thee.

All cannot use the same exercise; but one suits this person better, another that.

Moreover, according to the diversity of times, are different exercises agreeable; some please on holy-days, others suit better on common days.

We have need of one sort in time of temptation, of another in time of peace and quiet.

There are some things we love to think of when we are sad, and others when we are joyful in the Lord.

6. About the time of the principal festivals, we should renew our good exercises, and implore more fervently the intercession of the Saints.

From festival to festival we should make our resolutions, as if we were then to depart from this world, and to come to the eternal festival.

And so we ought carefully to prepare ourselves in seasons of devotion, and walk the more devoutly, and keep every observance the more strictly, as if we were in a little while to receive from God the reward of our labour.

7. And if it be put off, let us believe that we were not well enough prepared, and as yet unworthy of that so great glory,

which shall be revealed to us in the time appointed; and let us study to prepare ourselves the better for our departure.

Blessed is that servant, saith the Evangelist St Luke, whom, when the lord shall come, he shall find watching. Amen, I say unto you, he shall set him over all his possessions.

Chapter XX

Of the Love of Solitude and Silence

SEEK a convenient time to attend to thyself; and reflect often upon the benefits of God to thee.

Let curiosities alone.

Read such matters as may produce compunction rather than give occupation.

If thou wilt withdraw from superfluous talking and idle visitings, and from hearing new things and rumours, thou wilt find time sufficient and proper to spend in good meditations.

The greatest Saints shunned the company of men when they could, and chose rather to live unto God in secret.

2. As often as I have been amongst men, said one, I have returned less a man. This we too often experience when we talk long.

It is easier to keep silence altogether than not to fall into excess in speaking.

It is easier to keep retired at home than to be enough upon one's guard abroad.

He, therefore, who aims at inward and spiritual things, must, with Jesus, turn aside from the crowd.

No man can safely appear in public but he who loves seclusion.

No man can safely speak but he who loves silence.

No man can safely be a superior but he who loves to live in subjection.

No man can safely command but he who hath learned how to obey well.

3. No man can rejoice securely but he who hath the testimony of a good conscience within.

Yet even the security of the Saints was always full of the fear of God.

Neither were they the less careful and humble in themselves, because they shone with great virtues and grace.

But the security of the wicked ariseth from their pride and presumption, and in the end turns to their own deception.

Never promise thyself security in this life, however good a religious or devout solitary thou mayest seem to be.

4. Oftentimes the highest in men's estimation have been in the greater danger, by reason of their too much confidence.

And hence it is more useful for many not to be wholly without temptations, but to be very often assaulted, lest they be too secure, lest perhaps they be lifted up unto pride, and even turn aside, with too little restraint, after exterior consolation.

Oh, how good a conscience would he keep who should never seek transitory joys, and never busy himself about the world!

Oh, how great peace and tranquillity would he have who should cut off all vain solicitude, and think only of the things of God and his salvation, and place his whole hope in God!

5. No one is worthy of heavenly consolation who hath not diligently exercised himself in holy compunction.

If thou wouldst feel compunction to thy very heart, enter into thy chamber and shut out the tumult of the world, as it is written: 'Be sorry in your beds.'

Thou wilt find in thy cell what thou wilt too often lose abroad.

The cell continually dwelt in, groweth sweet; but ill-guarded, it begetteth weariness.

If, in the beginning of thy religious life, thou dwell in it and keep it well, it will be to thee afterwards as a dear friend and most delightful solace.

6. In silence and quiet the devout soul maketh progress, and learneth the hidden things of Scripture.

There she findeth floods of tears, wherein each night she may wash and be cleansed; and so become the more familiar with her Creator, the further she dwelleth from all tumult of the world.

For who withdraweth himself from acquaintances and friends, to him will God, with His holy Angels, draw near.

Better is it to lie hid and take diligent care of thyself, than, neglecting thyself, to work miracles.

It is praiseworthy for a religious but seldom to go abroad, to shun being seen, and to have no wish to see men.

7. Why dost thou wish to see what is not lawful for thee to have? The world passeth away and its concupiscence.

The longings of sense draw thee to roam abroad; but when thy hour hath passed away, what dost thou bring back with thee but a weight upon thy conscience, and a dissipated heart?

Oftentimes a joyous going abroad begetteth a sorrowful return home: and a merry evening maketh a sorrowful morning.

So all carnal joys enter pleasantly, but at the end bring remorse and death.

8. What canst thou see elsewhere that thou dost not see here? Behold the heavens, and the earth, and all the elements; for out of these are all things made.

9. What canst thou see anywhere that can last long under the sun?

Thou trustest that perchance thou wilt be satisfied; but thou wilt never be able to reach it.

If thou couldst see all things at once before thee, what would it be but an empty vision?

Lift up thine eyes to God on high, and pray for thy sins and negligences.

Leave vain things to vain people; look thou to those things which God hath commanded thee.

Shut thy door upon thee, and call unto thee Jesus, thy beloved.

Stay with Him in thy cell; for nowhere else shalt thou find so great peace.

If thou hadst never left it, nor hearkened to any rumours, thou wouldst have remained longer in happy peace. But the moment thou delightest to give ear to novelty, thou must suffer from thence disquietude of heart.

Chapter XXI

Of Compunction of Heart

If thou wouldst make any progress, keep thyself in the fear of God, and be not too free: curb all thy senses under discipline, and give not thyself up to foolish mirth.

Give thyself to compunction of heart, and thou shalt find devotion.

Compunction opens the way to much good, which dissipation is wont quickly to lose.

It is wonderful that any man can ever abandon himself wholly to joy in this life, when he considereth and weigheth his exile and the many dangers of his soul.

2. Through levity of heart and neglect of our defects, we feel not the sorrows of the soul; and we often vainly laugh when in all reason we should weep.

There is no true liberty nor profitable joy but in the fear of God with a good conscience.

Happy is the man that can cast away all the hindrance of distraction, and recollect himself in the unity of holy compunction.

Happy the man who casteth away from him whatever may stain or burden his conscience.

Strive manfully; habit is overcome by habit.

If thou canst let men alone, they will let thee alone to do whatever thou hast to do.

3. Busy not thyself in matters which appertain to others; and entangle not thyself in the affairs of the great.

Have always an eye upon thyself in the first place, and admonish thyself preferably to all thy dearest friends.

If thou hast not the favour of men, be not afflicted; but let it seriously concern thee, that thou dost not carry thyself so well and circumspectly as a servant of God and a devout religious ought to do.

Oftentimes it is better and safer for a man not to have many consolations in this life, especially such as are according to the flesh. Still, that we have not divine comfort is our own fault,

because we seek not compunction of heart, and do not wholly renounce vain and outward satisfaction.

4. Know that thou art unworthy of heavenly consolation, but rather deservest much tribulation.

When a man hath perfect compunction, then the whole world is to him burdensome and distasteful.

A good man findeth abundant matter for sorrow and tears.

For whether he considereth himself, or thinketh of his neighbour, he knoweth that no man liveth here below without tribulation.

And the more strictly he doth consider himself, the greater is his sorrow.

The subjects of just sorrow and interior compunction are our sins and vices, in which we are so enrapt that we are seldom able to fix our mind on heavenly things.

5. Didst thou think oftener of thy death than of a long life, no doubt but thou wouldst be more in earnest for thy amendment.

Didst thou also well ponder in thy heart the future pains of hell or purgatory, methinks thou wouldst bear willingly labour and sorrow, and fear no kind of austerity.

But because these things reach not the heart, and we still love flattering pleasure, therefore we remain cold and very slothful.

Oftentimes it is our want of spirit that maketh the wretched body complain for so slight cause.

Pray, therefore, humbly to the Lord to give unto thee the spirit of compunction, and say with the Prophet: 'Feed me, O Lord, with the food of tears, and give me to drink of tears in measure.'

Chapter XXII

Of the Consideration of Human Misery

WRETCHED art thou wheresoever thou be and whithersoever thou turn thee, unless thou turn thyself unto God. Why art thou troubled that things go not with thee as thou wishest and desirest? Who is there that hath all things according to his will? Neither I, nor thou, nor any man upon earth.

There is no man in the world without some trouble or affliction, be he King or Pope.

Who, then, is the best off? Truly he that is able to suffer something for the love of God.

2. Weak-minded and inconstant people often say: See what a happy life that man leadeth! how rich he is, how great, how powerful and exalted!

But take heed to heavenly riches, and thou wilt see that all these temporal ones are nothing; yea, most uncertain, and rather a heavy burden, since they never are possessed without solicitude and fear.

Man's happiness is not the having temporal goods in abundance; but a moderate portion is sufficient for him.

Truly it is a misery to live upon the earth.

The more a man desireth to be spiritual, the more distasteful doth this present life become to him; for he the better understandeth and more clearly seeth the defects of human corruption.

For to eat, to drink, to watch, to sleep, to rest, to labour, and to be subject to the other necessities of nature, truly is a great misery and affliction to a devout man, who longeth to be released and to have done with all sin.

3. For the interior man is greatly weighed down by the necessities of the body in this life.

Hence the Prophet devoutly prayeth that he may be free from them, saying: 'From my necessities deliver me, O Lord.'

But woe to them that know not their own misery; and still more woe to them that make this wretched and perishable life the object of their love.

For some there are who cling to it so closely (though even by

labouring or by begging they hardly have bare necessaries) that, could they live here always, they would care nothing for the kingdom of God.

4. O senseless people! and unbelieving in heart, to lie buried so deep in earthly things, as to relish nothing but what is carnal!

Miserable men! yet a while, and in the end they will feel bitterly what a worthless thing and nothing it was that they have been loving.

But the Saints of God and all devoted friends of Christ looked not to what pleased the flesh, nor to what flourished for the time of this life; but all their hopes and aims aspired after the good things that are eternal.

All their desires tended upwards to the things everlasting and invisible, for fear lest by the love of things visible they should be dragged down to things below.

Lose not, brother, thy confidence of making spiritual progress; thou hast yet time—the hour is not yet passed.

5. Why wilt thou put off thy purpose from day to day? Arise, and begin this very instant, and say: Now is the time to do, now is the time to fight, now is the proper time to amend my life.

When thou art troubled and afflicted, then is the time of merit.

Thou must pass through fire and water before thou comest to refreshment.

Except thou do violence to thyself, thou wilt not overcome vice.

As long as we carry about this frail body, we cannot be free from sin, nor live without weariness and sorrow.

Fain would we be at rest from all misery; but since we have lost innocence through sin, we have lost also true blessedness.

We must therefore have patience, and wait God's mercy, till iniquity pass away and this mortality be swallowed up in life.

6. Oh, how great is human frailty, which is ever prone to vice!

To-day thou confessest thy sins, and to-morrow thou again committest what thou didst confess.

Now thou purposest to be upon thy guard, and an hour after thou art acting as if thou hadst made no resolution.

Justly then may we humble ourselves, and never think anything great of ourselves, since we are so frail and unstable.

And even what we have at last just acquired through grace and with great labour, may soon be lost through negligence.

7. What will become of us in the end, if we begin so early to grow lukewarm?

Woe to us if we thus wish to turn aside to rest, as if there were already peace and security, when there does not as yet appear a trace of true holiness in our deportment!

Very useful would it be for us to be yet again instructed, like good novices, to the highest morality—if, haply, there might be hope of some future improvement and greater spiritual progress.

Chapter XXIII

Of the Thoughts of Death

A very little while and all will be over with thee here. See to it, how it stands with thee in the next life. Man to-day is, and to-morrow he is seen no more.

And when he is taken away from the sight, he is quickly also out of mind.

Oh, the dullness and the hardness of the human heart, that dwelleth only upon things present, instead rather of providing for those which are to come!

Thou shouldst so order thyself in every deed and thought as if thou wert immediately to die.

If thou hadst a good conscience, thou wouldst not much fear death.

It were better to shun sin than to fly death.

If thou art not prepared to-day, how wilt thou be to-morrow?

To-morrow is an uncertain day; and how knowest thou if thou shalt have to-morrow?

2. Of what use is it to live long, when we advance so little?

Ah, long life doth not always amend us; nay, oftentimes doth rather augment our guilt.

Would that even for one day we had behaved ourselves well in this world!

Many count the years of their conversion; but oftentimes the fruit of amendment is but little.

If it is a fearful thing to die, perhaps it will be still more dangerous to live longer.

Blessed is the man that hath the hour of his death continually before his eyes, and daily putteth himself in order for death.

If thou hast at any time seen a person die, reflect that thou too must pass the same way.

3. When it is morning, think thou wilt not live till evening.

And when evening comes, venture not to promise thyself the next morning.

Be, therefore, always in readiness, and so live that death may never find thee unprepared.

Many die suddenly and unprovidedly, for the Son of Man will come at the hour when He is not looked for.

When that last hour shall have come, then thou wilt begin to think far otherwise of all thy past life; and great will be thy grief that thou hast been so neglectful and remiss.

4. How happy and how prudent is he who now striveth to be in life what he would fain be found in death.

For it will give great confidence of dying happily to have a perfect contempt of the world, a fervent desire to advance in virtue, a love of discipline, the spirit of penance, readiness of obedience, abnegation of self, and patience to bear any kind of adversity for the love of Christ.

Many are the good works thou canst do whilst in health; but when thou art sick, I know not what thou wilt be able to do.

Few are improved by sickness; so also they that go much abroad seldom grow in sanctity.

5. Trust not in thy friends and neighbours, and put not off thy soul's welfare till the future, for men will forget thee sooner than thou thinkest.

It is better to provide now in time, and send some good before thee, than to trust to the assistance of others after death.

If thou art not solicitous for thyself now, who will be solicitous for thee hereafter?

Now is the time very precious, now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation.

But, O misery! that thou spendest not this time more profitably, wherein thou hast it in thy power to merit that thou mayest live eternally.

The time will come when thou wilt fain implore one day or even one hour for amendment; and I know not if thou wilt obtain it.

6. Oh, then, dearly beloved, from what great danger mayest thou free thyself, from what great fear be rescued, if only thou wouldst be always fearful, and looking for death!

Study, therefore, so to live now, that in the hour of death thou mayest be able rather to rejoice than to fear.

Learn now to die to the world, that then thou mayest begin to live with Christ.

Learn now to despise all things, that then thou mayest freely go to Christ.

Chastise thy body now by penance, that then thou mayest have a certain confidence.

7. Ah, fool! why thinkest thou to live long, when here thou hast not a day secure?

How many souls have been deceived, and snatched unexpectedly from life.

How often hast thou heard related that such a one fell by the sword, another is drowned, another falling from on high broke his neck, this man died at table, that other came to his end at play!

Some perish by fire, some by the sword, some by pestilence, some by the hands of robbers; and so death is the end of all; and man's life passeth away suddenly, like a shadow.

8. Who will remember thee when thou art dead? and who will pray for thee?

Do now, beloved, do now, all thou canst; for thou knowest not when thou art to die, and moreover, thou knowest not what will befal thee after death.

Whilst thou hast time, amass for thyself immortal riches.

Think of nothing but thy salvation; care only for the things of God.

Make to thyself friends now, by venerating the Saints of God and imitating their actions, that when thou shalt fail in this life they may receive thee into everlasting dwellings.

9. Keep thyself as a pilgrim and a stranger upon earth, that hath no concern with the business of the world.

Keep thy heart free and lifted up to God, for thou hast not here a lasting city.

Send thither thy prayers and daily sighs, with tears, that thy spirit may merit after death to pass happily to our Lord. Amen.

Chapter XXIV

Of Judgment and the Punishment of Sinners

In all things look to the end, and how thou wilt stand before the strict Judge, from whom there is nothing hid; who takes no bribes, and receives no excuses, but will judge that which is just.

O most miserable and foolish sinner, what wilt thou answer unto God, who knoweth all thy evil deeds—thou who art sometimes afraid of an angry man?

Why dost thou not provide thee against the day of judgment, when no man can be excused or defended by another, but each one will have enough to do to answer for himself?

Now thy labour is profitable, thy tears are acceptable, thy groans are heard, thy sorrow is satisfying and purifieth the soul.

2. The patient man hath a great and wholesome purgatory; who, suffering wrongs, is more concerned at another's malice than at his own injury; who prays freely for his adversaries, forgiving their offences from his heart; who delays not to ask pardon of others; who is easier moved to pity than to anger; who does frequent violence to himself, and strives to bring his flesh wholly in subjection to the spirit.

Better is it to purge away our sins, and cut off our vices now, than to keep them for purgation hereafter.

Truly we deceive ourselves, through the inordinate love we bear the flesh.

3. What else will that fire devour but thy sins?

The more thou sparest thyself now, and followest the flesh, so much the more dearly shalt thou pay for it hereafter, and the more fuel dost thou lay up for that fire.

In what things a man hath most sinned, in those things shall he be most grievously punished.

There the slothful will be pricked with burning goads, the gluttonous tormented with extreme hunger and thirst; there the luxurious and the lovers of pleasure will have burning pitch and fetid sulphur rained upon them; and the envious, like rabid dogs, will howl for grief.

4. There will be no vice but will have its own peculiar torment.

There the proud will be filled with all confusion, and the avaricious pinched with the most miserable want.

There one hour of punishment will be more grievous than a hundred years of the most bitter penance here.

There will be no rest, no consolation for the damned; but here we sometimes cease from labour and enjoy the consolation of our friends.

Be, therefore, now solicitous and sorrowful for thy sins, that in the day of judgment thou mayest be in security with the blessed; for then the just shall stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted and oppressed them.

Then will he stand up to judge who now humbly submitteth himself to the judgment of men.

Then shall the poor and humble have great confidence, and the proud will fear on every side.

5. Then will it appear that he was wise in this world, who for Christ's sake learned to be a fool and despised.

Then every tribulation, borne with patience, shall be pleasing, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

Then shall every devout person rejoice, and all the irreligious shall be sad.

Then shall the flesh that was afflicted exult more than if it had always fared in delights.

Then shall the mean habits shine, and the fine garment grow dingy.

Then shall the poor cottage be praised above the gilded palace.

Then shall enduring patience more avail than all the power of the world.

Then shall simple obedience be more highly exalted than all worldly cunning.

6. Then a pure and good conscience shall bring more joy than learned philosophy.

Then shall the contempt of riches far outweigh all the treasures of the children of earth.

Then shalt thou find more consolation in having prayed devoutly than in having feasted daintily.

Then shalt thou rejoice more in having kept silence than for having made long discourses, or talked much.

Then shall holy works be of greater value than multitudes of goodly words.

Then shall strictness of life and hard penance please more than all the delights of earth.

Learn to suffer in little things now, that then thou mayest be delivered from more grievous sufferings.

Try first here what thou canst bear hereafter.

If now thou canst endure so little, how wilt thou be able to suffer eternal torments?

If now a little suffering makes thee so impatient, what will hell do then?

Behold, assuredly both joys thou canst not have—to delight thyself here in this world, and afterwards to reign with Christ.

7. If up to this very day thou hadst always lived in honours and pleasures, what would it all profit thee, did it happen that thou must immediately die?

All, therefore, is vanity, except to love God and serve Him only.

For he that loveth God with his whole heart, feareth neither death, nor punishment, nor judgment, nor hell; for perfect love giveth secure access to God.

But he who still finds delight in sin, no wonder if he fears death and judgment.

It is good, however, if love as yet reclaims thee not from evil, that at least the fear of hell do check thee.

For, indeed, he that setteth aside the fear of God, will not be able to persevere long in good, but will very soon fall into the snares of the devil.

Chapter XXV

Of the Fervent Amendment of our Whole Life

Be watchful and diligent in the service of God, and often reflect: What hast thou come hither for, and why hast thou left the world? Was it not that thou mightest live for God, and become a spiritual man?

Be fervent, then, in making progress; for thou shalt shortly receive the reward of thy labours, and then neither fear nor sorrow shall come near thy borders.

Thou shalt labour a little now, and thou shalt find great rest, yea, everlasting joy.

If thou continue faithful and fervent in doing, God will doubtless be faithful and rich in rewarding.

Thou must keep a good and firm hope of coming to the crown; but thou must not be too secure, lest thou grow indolent, or be lifted up.

2. When a certain anxious person, who oftentimes wavered between hope and fear, once overcome with sadness, threw himself upon the ground in prayer before one of the altars in the church, and revolving these things in his mind, said 'Oh, if I only knew that I should persevere' that very instant he heard within him this heavenly answer: And if thou didst know this, what wouldst thou do? Do now what thou wouldst then do, and thou shalt be perfectly secure.

And immediately being consoled and comforted, he committed himself to the divine will, and his anxious wavering ceased.

He had no longer any wish for curious searchings to find out what should happen to him, but studied rather to learn what was the acceptable and perfect will of God for the beginning and perfecting of every good work.

3. 'Hope in the Lord,' saith the Prophet, 'and do good, and inhabit the land, and thou shalt be fed with the riches thereof.'

There is one thing that keepeth many back from spiritual progress, and from fervour in amendment; namely, a dread of the difficulty or of the labour that is necessary in the struggle.

And assuredly they especially advance beyond others in virtue,

who strive the most manfully to overcome the very things which are the hardest and most contrary to them.

For there a man doth profit most and merit more abundant grace, where he doth most overcome himself and mortify his spirit.

4. All have not, indeed, equal difficulties to overcome and mortify; but a diligent and zealous person will make greater progress, though he have more passions than another, who is well regulated, but less fervent in the pursuit of virtues.

Two things especially conduce to great improvement, namely, forcibly to withdraw oneself from what nature is viciously inclined to, and fervently to follow up the good one is most in need of.

Study, likewise, especially to guard against and to get the better of such things as oftenest displease thee in others.

5. Turn all occasions to thy spiritual profit, so that the good examples thou mayest see or hear of may stir thee up to imitate them.

And whatever thou shalt observe that is blameworthy, take care not to do the same thing thyself; or if thou have ever done so, study to amend as soon as possible.

As thine eye observeth others, so again thou art also observed by others.

How pleasant and sweet it is to see brethren fervent and devout, well mannered and well disciplined!

How sad and afflicting to see them walking disorderly, and not practising the things that they are called to!

How mischievous it is to neglect the purpose of their vocation, and turn their minds to what is not their business!

6. Do thou be mindful of the purpose thou hast undertaken, and place before thee the image of the Crucified.

Well mayest thou be ashamed when looking into the life of Jesus Christ, that as yet thou hast not studied more to conform thyself to Him, long as thou hast been in the way of God.

The religious who exerciseth himself earnestly and devoutly in the most holy life and passion of our Lord, shall find there abundantly all that is useful and necessary for him; nor need he seek out of Jesus for anything better.

Oh, if the crucified Jesus should come into our heart, how quickly and sufficiently learned should we be!

7. The fervent religious beareth and taketh all things well, whatever he is commanded.

The negligent and lukewarm religious hath trouble upon trouble, and endureth anguish on every side; for he has no consolation within, and is forbidden to seek it without.

The religious that liveth out of discipline is exposed to dreadful ruin.

He that is seeking to be more free and unrestrained, will always be in trouble, for one thing or other will ever disgust him.

8. How do so many other religious do, who live most strictly under the cloistered discipline?

They seldom go abroad, they live retired, they are fed on the very poorest, they are coarsely clad, they labour much, they talk little, they keep late vigils, they rise early, they spend much time in prayer, they read frequently, and keep themselves in all discipline.

Consider the Carthusians and the Cistercians, and the monks and nuns of other religious orders, how they rise every night to sing praises to the Lord! And what a shame it would be for thee to grow slothful at such a time, when so great a multitude of religious are beginning to sing aloud with joy to God!

9. Oh, if there were nothing else to do but praise the Lord our God with all our heart and voice! Oh, if thou didst never require to eat, or drink, or sleep, but couldst be always praising God, and occupied with spiritual pursuits only, then thou wouldst be much happier than now, since thou art a slave to the flesh from necessities of every kind.

Would to God that there were none of these necessities, but only spiritual reflections required for the soul. These, alas, it is seldom enough we taste!

10. When a man hath arrived so far, that he seeks his consolation from no created thing, then first doth he begin truly to taste what God is; then, too, will he be well content with everything that happens.

Then will he neither rejoice for much nor be sorrowful for little, but will commit himself wholly and confidingly to God, who is to him all in all: to whom nothing is lost or dieth, but for whom all things live, and at whose beck they instantly obey.

11. Ever keep in mind thine end, and that time lost returneth no more.

Without care and diligence thou shalt never acquire virtues.

If once thou beginnest to grow lukewarm, thou beginnest to be in a bad state.

But if thou give thyself to fervour, thou shalt find great peace;

and thou shalt feel thy labour light, through the grace of God, and for the love of virtue.

The fervent and diligent man is ready for all things.

It is harder labour to withstand our vices and passions than to toil at bodily labours.

He that shunneth not small defects, by little and little falleth into greater.

Thou wilt always be glad in the evening if thou spend the day profitably.

Watch over thyself, stir up thyself, admonish thyself, and whatever may become of others, neglect not thyself.

In proportion as thou dost violence to thyself, the greater progress wilt thou make. Amen.

BOOK SECOND

CHAPTER I

Of Interior Conversation

THE kingdom of God is within you, saith the Lord.

Turn thee unto the Lord with thy whole heart, and quit this miserable world, and thy soul shall find rest.

Learn to slight exterior things, and to give thyself to interior things, and thou shalt see the kingdom of God come within thee.

The kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; which is not given to the wicked.

Christ will come to thee and discover His consolation to thee, if thou wilt prepare for Him a fit dwelling within thee.

All His glory and beauty are from within; and there it is that He taketh delight.

Many are His visits to the man of interior life, and sweet the conversation that He holdeth with him; plenteous His consolations, His peace, and His familiarity.

2. Come, then, faithful soul, make thy heart ready for this Spouse, so that He may vouchsafe to come to thee and to dwell within thee.

For so He saith: 'If any man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him; We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.'

Give admittance, therefore, to Christ, and refuse entrance to all beside.

When thou hast Christ, thou art rich, and He is sufficient for thee.

He will provide for thee, and be thy faithful procurator in all things, so that thou needest not to trust in men.

For men soon change, and they quickly fail; but Christ abideth for ever, and standeth by us firmly to the end.

3. No great confidence must we place in frail and mortal man, useful though he be, and dearly beloved; nor shouldst thou be much grieved if he sometimes oppose and contradict thee.

They that to-day are with thee, to-morrow may be against thee; and they often change to the contrary, like the wind.

Put thy whole trust in God, and let Him be thy fear and thy love.

He will answer for thee, and will graciously do for thee as shall be best.

Here thou hast no abiding city; and wherever thou shalt be, thou art a stranger and a pilgrim; nor wilt thou ever have rest, except thou be interiorly united with Christ.

4. Why dost thou stand looking about thee here, since this is not the place of thy rest?

Thy abode must be in heaven, and thou shouldst look upon all earthly things as it were in passing.

All things pass away, and thou too along with them.

See thou cleave not to them, lest thou be ensnared, and perish.

Let thy thoughts be with the Most High, and let thy prayers be sent forth without ceasing unto Christ.

If thou knowest not how to meditate on high and heavenly things, rest in the passion of Christ, and love to dwell within His sacred wounds.

For if thou devoutly betake thyself to the wounds and precious stigmas of Jesus, thou shalt feel great comfort in tribulation; thou wilt not care much for being slighted by men, and wilt easily bear the speeches of detractors.

5. Christ also was despised by men in the world, and in His greatest need He was, by His acquaintances and His friends, forsaken amidst insults.

Christ was willing to suffer and to be despised, and darest thou complain of aught?

Christ had enemies and detractors, and wouldst thou have all to be thy friends and benefactors?

Whence shall thy patience be crowned, if thou meet with no adversity?

If thou wilt suffer no contradiction, how canst thou be the friend of Christ?

Endure with Christ and for Christ, if thou wouldst reign with Christ.

6. If thou hadst once perfectly entered into the interior of Jesus, and tasted a little of His ardent love, then wouldst thou care but little for thy own convenience or inconvenience, but wouldst rather rejoice at reproach; for the love of Jesus maketh a man despise himself.

A lover of Jesus and the truth, a true interior person, who is free from inordinate affections, can freely turn himself to God,

elevate himself above himself in spirit, and enjoy a delightful repose.

7. He whose taste discerneth all things as they are, and not as they are said or accounted to be, is truly a wise man, and taught rather of God than of men.

He that knoweth how to walk interiorly, and to make but little account of things exteriorly, doth not look for places nor wait for seasons to perform exercises of devotion.

The man of interior life soon recollecteth himself, because he never wholly poureth forth himself upon exterior things.

Exterior labour is no prejudice to him nor any employment necessary for the time; but as things happen, so he accommodateth himself to them.

He who is well disposed and orderly in his interior, is not concerned about the strange and perverse doings of men.

Just so much is a man hindered and distracted in proportion as he draws things to himself.

8. If all were right within thee, and thou wert well purified, all things would tend to thy good and thy profit.

The reason why many things displease thee, and oftentimes disturb thee, is, that thou art not yet perfectly dead to thyself, nor detached from earthly things.

There is nothing that so defileth and entangleth the heart of man as an impure attachment to created things.

If thou wilt refuse exterior consolations, then shalt thou be able to apply thy mind to heavenly things, and experience frequent interior joy.

Chapter II

Of Humble Submission

MAKE no great account of who may be for thee or against thee, but mind and take care that God be with thee in everything thou dost.

Have a good conscience, and God will sufficiently defend thee; for he whom God will help, no man's malice can hurt.

If thou knowest only how to be silent and to endure, doubt not but that thou shalt experience help from the Lord.

He knoweth the time and the manner of thy deliverance; and, therefore, it is thy part to resign thyself into His hands.

It belongs to God to help us and deliver us from all confusion.

Many a time it is a great advantage to us, for the keeping us in greater humility, that others know and reprehend our faults.

2. When a man humbleth himself for his faults, then he really pacifieth others, and easily satisfieth those who are angry with him.

The humble man God protecteth and delivereth; the humble He loveth and consoleth; to the humble He inclineth Himself; on the humble He bestoweth bounteous grace, and after he hath been brought low, raiseth him up unto glory.

To the humble He revealeth His secrets, and sweetly inviteth and draweth him unto Himself.

The humble man, in the midst of reproaches, remaineth in great peace; for his dependence is on God, and not on the world.

Never think that thou hast thyself made any progress until thou feel that thou art inferior to all.

Chapter III

Of the Good Peaceable Man

First keep thyself in peace, and then shalt thou be able to bring others to peace.

The peaceable man does more good than one that is very learned.

The passionate man turneth even good to evil, and readily believeth evil.

The good, peaceable man turneth all things unto good.

He that is in perfect peace suspecteth no man.

But he that is discontented and disturbed is agitated by various suspicions; he neither hath rest himself, nor suffereth others to rest.

Many a time he saith what he ought not to say, and leaveth undone that which it were best for him to do.

He considers what others ought to do, and neglecteth that which he is bound to do himself.

Have, therefore, a zeal in the first place over thyself, and then mayest thou also justly exercise zeal towards thy neighbour.

2. Thou knowest well how to excuse and gloss over thine own deeds, but thou wilt not accept the excuses of others.

It were more just for thee to accuse thyself, and to excuse thy brother.

If thou wishest to be borne with, bear also with others.

See how far thou yet art from true charity and humility, which knoweth not how to feel anger or indignation against anyone but oneself.

It is no great thing to associate with the good and the gentle: for this is naturally pleasing to all, and every one preferreth peace and lovest best those that have like sentiments.

But to be able to live peacefully with the hard and the perverse, or with the undisciplined and those who contradict us, is a great grace, and a highly commendable and manly thing.

3. Some there are who keep themselves in peace, and have peace also with others; and there are some who neither have peace themselves, nor leave others in peace; they are troublesome to others, and still more troublesome to themselves.

And there are those who keep themselves in peace, and study to restore peace to others.

Nevertheless, all our peace in this miserable life must be placed rather in humble endurance than in not experiencing oppositions.

He who best knows how to endure, will possess the greater peace.

Such a one is conqueror of himself and lord of the world, the friend of Christ and an heir of heaven.

Chapter IV

Of a Pure Mind and a Simple Intention

By two wings is man lifted above earthly things, viz. by simplicity and purity.

Simplicity must be in the intention, purity in the affection.

Simplicity aimeth at God, purity apprehendeth Him and tasteth Him.

No good work will be a hindrance to thee, provided thou be free interiorly from all inordinate affection.

If thou aim at and seek after nothing else but the will of God and thy neighbour's benefit, then shalt thou enjoy interior liberty.

If only thy heart were right, then every created thing would be to thee a mirror of life and a book of holy teaching.

There is no creature so little and so vile, that it showeth not forth the goodness of God.

2. If thou wert inwardly good and pure, then wouldst thou discern all things without impediment, and comprehend them well.

A pure heart penetrates heaven and hell.

According as everyone is interiorly, so doth he judge exteriorly.

If there be joy in the world, truly the man of pure heart possesseth it.

And if there be anywhere tribulation and distress, an evil conscience doth the more readily experience it.

As iron, cast into the fire, loses its rust, and becomes all bright with burning, so the man that turneth himself wholly to God is divested of all sloth, and changed into a new man.

3. When a man beginneth to grow lukewarm, then he is afraid of a little labour, and willingly receiveth exterior consolation.

But when he beginneth perfectly to overcome himself, and to walk manfully in the way of God, then he maketh little account of things that before seemed to him grievous.

Chapter V

Of Self-consideration

We may not trust too much to ourselves; for grace and understanding are often wanting to us.

There is in us but little light, and this we soon lose by negligence.

Oftentimes we are quite unconscious how interiorly blind we are.

We often do amiss, and do worse in excusing ourselves.

Sometimes we are moved by passion, and think it zeal.

We blame little things in others, and overlook great things in ourselves.

We are quick enough in perceiving and weighing what we bear from others; but we think little of what others have to bear from us.

He that should well and justly weigh his own doing, would find little cause to judge harshly of another.

2. The interior man regardeth the care of himself before all other cares; and he that looketh diligently to himself, findeth it not difficult to be silent about others.

Thou wilt never be interior and devout unless thou pass over in silence other men's affairs, and look especially to thyself.

If thou attend wholly to thyself and to God, what thou seest abroad will affect thee but little.

Where art thou when thou art absent from thyself?

And when thou hast run over all things, what hath it profited thee if thou hast neglected thyself?

If thou wouldst have true peace and perfect union, thou must cast all things else aside, and keep thy eyes upon thyself alone.

3. Thou wilt make great progress, if thou keep thyself free from every temporal anxiety.

Thou wilt fall back exceedingly, if thou make account of anything temporal.

Let there be nothing great, nothing high, nothing pleasant, nothing acceptable to thee but only God Himself, or what comes from God.

Think it all vanity, whatever consolation thou mayest meet with from any creature.

The soul that loveth God, despiseth all things that are less than God.

God only, the eternal and infinite, who filleth all things, is the solace of the soul and the true joy of the heart.

Chapter VI

Of the Joy of a Good Conscience

The good man's glory is the testimony of a good conscience. Have a good conscience, and thou shalt always have joy. A good conscience can bear very much, and is very joyful in the midst of adversity.

An evil conscience is always fearful and unquiet; sweetly shalt thou rest, if thy heart upbraid thee not.

Never rejoice except when thou hast done well.

The wicked never have true joy, nor feel interior peace; for 'there is no peace to the wicked,' saith the Lord.

And if they say: We are in peace, and there shall no evil come upon us, and who is there shall dare to harm me?

Believe them not; for suddenly the anger of God shall arise, and bring their deeds to nought, and their thoughts shall perish.

2. To glory in tribulation is not hard to him that loves; for so to glory is to glory in the cross of the Lord.

Short-lived is the glory that is given and received by men.

Sadness ever accompanieth the glory of this world.

The glory of the good is in their own consciences, and not in the mouth of men.

The joy of the just is from God and in God, and their rejoicing is in the truth.

He that longeth after true and everlasting glory, careth not for temporal.

And he that seeketh temporal glory, or doth not from his soul despise it, shows himself to have little love for that which is heavenly.

Great tranquillity of heart hath he who careth neither for praise nor blame.

3. Easily will he be content and at peace, whose conscience is undefiled.

Thou art not more holy for being praised, nor the worse for being blamed.

What thou art, that thou art; nor canst thou be said to be greater than God seeth thee to be.

If thou attend diligently to what thou art interiorly, thou wilt not regard what men say of thee.

Man looketh on the face, but God seeth into the heart.

Man considereth the actions, but God weigheth the intentions.

Always to do well, and to esteem oneself of small account, is the mark of an humble soul.

To refuse consolation from any creature, is the sign of great purity and of an interior confidence.

4. He that seeketh no outward testimony for himself, showeth plainly that he hath wholly committed himself to God.

'For not he that commendeth himself,' saith blessed Paul, 'is approved, but he whom God commendeth.'

To walk with God within, and to be bound by no affection from without, is the state of the man of interior life.

Chapter VII

Of the Love of Jesus above all Things

Blessed is he who understandeth what it is to love Jesus, and to despise himself for the sake of Jesus.

We must leave what is beloved, for the sake of the Beloved; for Jesus will be loved alone and above all things.

The love of things created is deceitful and inconstant; the love of Jesus is faithful and enduring.

He that clingeth to the creature shall fall with its falling.

He that embraceth Jesus shall be firmly rooted forever.

Love Him, and keep Him for thy friend, who, when all forsake, will not leave thee, nor suffer thee to perish finally.

Sooner or later thou must be separated from all, whether thou wilt or not.

2. In life and in death keep thyself near to Jesus, and entrust thyself to His fidelity, who alone can help thee when all others fail.

The nature of thy Beloved is such, that He will not admit of a rival; but He will have thy heart for Himself alone, and sit as king upon His own throne.

If thou couldst empty thy heart of every creature, Jesus would willingly make His dwelling with thee.

Whatsoever thou reposest in men, out of Jesus, thou wilt find to be wellnigh lost.

Trust not, nor lean upon a reed full of wind. 'For all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof shall fade like the flower of grass.'

3. Thou wilt soon be deceived, if thou regard only the external appearance of men. Indeed, if thou seek in others thy comfort and thy profit, thou wilt more often meet with loss.

If in all things thou seekest Jesus, truly thou shalt find Jesus; but if thou seek thyself, thou shalt find thyself also, but to thy own ruin.

For, if a man seek not Jesus, he doth himself more harm than the whole world and all his enemies can do him.

Chapter VIII

Of Familiar Friendship with Jesus

When Jesus is present, all is well and nothing seems difficult; but when Jesus is absent, everything is hard.

When Jesus speaketh not within, consolation is little worth; but if Jesus speak only one word, we feel great consolation.

Did not Mary Magdalen instantly rise up from the place where she wept when Martha said to her: 'The Master is come, and calleth for thee'?

Happy hour, when Jesus calleth thee from tears to joy of spirit.

How dry and hard art thou without Jesus! How foolish and vain, if thou desire anything out of Jesus!

Is not this a greater loss to thee than if thou shouldst lose the whole world?

2. What can the world give thee without Jesus?

To be without Jesus is a grievous hell; to be with Jesus a sweet paradise.

If Jesus be with thee, no foe can harm thee.

Whoever findeth Jesus findeth a good treasure—yea, a good above every good.

And he that loseth Jesus loseth much—yea, more than the whole world.

He that liveth without Jesus is in wretched poverty; and he who is with Jesus, is most rich.

3. It is a great art to know how to converse with Jesus; and to know how to keep Jesus is great wisdom.

Be humble and peaceable, and Jesus will be with thee.

Be devout and calm, and Jesus will abide with thee.

Thou mayest soon drive away Jesus, and lose His grace, if thou wilt turn aside after outward things.

And if thou drive Him from thee and lose Him, to whom wilt thou fly? And whom, then, wilt thou seek for thy friend?

Without a friend, thou canst not live happily; and if Jesus be not a friend to thee above all, thou wilt indeed be sad and desolate.

Thou dost foolishly, therefore, to trust in any other, or to rejoice in any other.

We ought rather to choose to have the whole world against us, than to offend Jesus.

Of all, therefore, that are dear to thee, let Jesus be thy special beloved.

4. Let all be loved for Jesus' sake, but Jesus for His own sake.

Jesus Christ alone is singly to be loved; for He alone is found good and faithful above all friends.

For His sake, and in Him, let enemies as well as friends be dear to thee: and for all these thou must pray to Him, that all may know and love Him.

Never desire to be singly praised or beloved; for this belongeth to God alone, who hath none like unto Himself.

Neither desire that anyone's heart should be much taken up with thee; nor do thou be much taken up with the love of anyone; but let Jesus be in thee and in every good man.

5. Be pure and free interiorly, without being entangled by any creature.

Thou must be naked and bear a pure heart towards God, if thou wilt be free and experience how sweet the Lord is.

And, indeed, thou wilt never attain to this, unless thou be prevented and drawn by His grace, that so thou mayest be united to Him alone, when thou hast cast out and dismissed all others.

For when the grace of God cometh to a man, then is he powerful for all things; and when it departeth, then is he poor and weak, and left only as it were to scourgings.

In these circumstances, he must not be dejected nor despair; but calmly remain, awaiting the will of God, and bear, for the glory of Jesus Christ, whatever shall befall him; because, after the winter cometh summer, after the night the day returneth, after the storm cometh a great calm.

Chapter IX

Of the Want of all Consolation

It is not hard to despise all human consolation when we have divine.

But it is much, and very much, to be able to forgo all comfort, both human and divine, and to be willing to bear this interior banishment for God's honour, and to seek oneself in nothing, nor to think of one's own merit.

What so great thing is it, if thou be cheerful and devout when grace comes? This hour is desirable to all.

He rides pleasantly enough who is carried by the grace of God.

And what wonder if he feel no weight, who is borne up by the Almighty, and led on by the Sovereign Guide.

2. We love to have something to comfort us, and it is with difficulty that a man can put off himself.

The holy Martyr Lawrence, with his priest, overcame the world, because he despised whatever seemed delightful in this world; and for the love of Christ, he suffered the High Priest of God, Sixtus, whom he exceedingly loved, to be taken away from Him.

He overcame, therefore, the love of man by the love of the Creator; and instead of the consolation he had in man, he made choice rather of God's good pleasure.

So, do thou also learn to part with an intimate and beloved friend for the love of God.

And take it not to heart when thou art forsaken by a friend, knowing that at last we must all be separated one from another.

3. A man must have a great and a long conflict within himself, before he can learn fully to overcome himself, and to direct his whole affection towards God.

When a man stands upon himself, he easily inclines after human consolations.

But a true lover of Christ, and a diligent pursuer of virtue, does not fall back upon comforts, nor seek such sensible delights, but rather prefers hard exercises, and to sustain severe labours for Christ.

4. Therefore, when God gives spiritual consolation, receive it with thanksgiving; but know that it is God's free gift, and no merit of thine.

Be not lifted up, be not overjoyed, nor vainly presume, but rather be the more humble for this gift, more cautious, too, and fearful in all thy actions; for that hour will pass away, and temptation follow.

When consolation shall be taken away from thee, do not presently despair, but with humility and patience await the heavenly visitation, since God is able to restore to thee more abundant consolation.

This is no new nor strange occurrence to those who have known the way of God; for among the great Saints and ancient Prophets there has often been this kind of vicissitude.

5. Hence there was one who, when grace was with him, exclaimed: 'I said in my abundance, I shall not be moved for ever.'

But when grace was withdrawn, he tells what he experienced in himself, saying: 'Thou hast turned away Thy face from me, and I became troubled.'

Yet even then he despaireth not, but more earnestly prayeth to the Lord, and saith: 'Unto Thee, O Lord, will I cry; and to my God will I make supplication.'

At length he receiveth the fruit of his prayer, and witnesseth that he was heard, saying: 'The Lord hath heard, and hath had mercy on me: the Lord hath become my helper.'

But in what way? 'Thou hast turned,' he saith, 'my mourning into joy, and Thou hast encompassed me with gladness.'

If it hath been thus with great Saints, we that are weak and poor must not be discouraged if we are sometimes fervent, sometimes cold, because the Spirit cometh and goeth according to his own good pleasure.

Wherefore holy Job saith: 'Thou visitest him early in the morning, and on a sudden Thou triest him.'

6. Wherein then, can I hope, or in what must I put my trust, but in God's great mercy alone, and in the hope of heavenly grace?

For whether I have with me good men, or devout brethren, or faithful friends, or holy books, or beautiful treatises, or sweet canticles and hymns, all these help but little, give me but little relish, when I am forsaken by grace and left in my own poverty.

At such a time there is no better remedy than patience, and denying of myself according to the will of God.

7. I never found anyone so religious and devout as not sometimes to experience a withdrawal of grace, or feel a diminution of fervour.

No Saint was ever so sublimely rapt and illuminated as not to be tempted sooner or later.

For he is not worthy the sublime contemplation of God, who has not, for God's sake, been exercised with some tribulation.

For preceding temptation is usually a sign of ensuing consolation.

For heavenly comfort is promised to such as have been proved by temptation.

'To him that shall overcome,' saith the Lord, 'I will give to eat of the tree of life.'

8. Now divine consolation is given that a man may the better be able to support adversities.

And temptation followeth, that he may not be elated by the good.

The devil sleepeth not, neither is the flesh yet dead; therefore thou must not cease to prepare thyself for the battle; for on the right hand and on the left are enemies that never rest.

Chapter X

Of Gratitude for the Grace of God

WHY seekest thou repose, since thou art born to labour? Dispose thyself to patience rather than to consolation, and to carrying the cross rather than to gladness.

For who is there amongst those of the world that would not willingly receive comfort and spiritual joy, if he could obtain it at all times?

Spiritual consolations, indeed, exceed all the delights of the world and pleasures of the flesh.

For all worldly delights are either vain or impure; but spiritual delights alone are delightful and honourable, as they spring from virtue, and are infused by God into pure minds.

But these divine consolations no man can always enjoy when he will, because the time of temptation is not long absent.

2. But what very much opposes these heavenly visits is a false liberty of mind and a great confidence in oneself.

God doth well in giving the grace of consolation, but man doth ill in not returning it all to God with thanksgiving.

And this is the reason why the gifts of grace cannot flow in us, because we are ungrateful to the Giver, nor do we return all to the fountain-head.

For grace will be always given to him that duly returns thanks; and what is wont to be given to the humble will be taken away from the proud.

3. I would not have any such consolation as robbeth me of compunction; nor do I wish to have such contemplation as leadeth to pride.

For all that is high is not holy; nor is every pleasant thing good, nor every desire pure; nor is everything that is dear to us pleasing to God.

I willingly accept of that grace which always maketh me more humble and fearful, and more ready to renounce myself.

He that hath been taught by the gift of grace, and instructed by the chastisement of its withdrawal, will not dare to attribute anything of good to himself, but will rather acknowledge himself to be poor and naked.

Give to God what is His, and ascribe to thyself what is thine—that is, give thanks to God for His grace; but as to thyself, be sensible that nothing is to be attributed to thee but sin, and the punishment sin deserveth.

4. Put thyself always in the lowest place, and the highest shall be given thee; for the highest standeth not without the lowest.

The Saints that are the highest in the sight of God are the least in their own eyes; and the more glorious they are, the more humble are they in themselves.

Full of truth and heavenly glory, they are not covetous of vain glory.

Being grounded and established in God, they can by no means be proud.

And they who attribute to God whatsoever good they have received, seek not glory from one another, but that glory which is from God alone; and they desire above all things that God may be praised in themselves and in all the Saints, and to this they are always tending.

5. Be grateful then for the least, and thou shalt be worthy to receive greater things.

Let the least be to thee as something very great, and the most contemptible as a special favour.

If thou considerest the dignity of the Giver, no gift will seem little or too mean for thee. For that is not little which is given by the most high God.

Yea, though He gave punishment and stripes, it ought to be acceptable; for whatever he suffereth to befall us, He always doth it for our salvation.

He that desireth to retain the grace of God, let him be thankful for grace when it is given, and patient when it is withdrawn.

Let him pray, that it may return; let him be cautious and humble, lest he lose it.

Chapter XI

Of the Small Number of the Lovers of the Cross of Jesus

Jesus hath now many lovers of His heavenly kingdom, but few bearers of His cross.

He hath many that are desirous of consolation, but few of tribulation.

He finds many companions of His table, but few of his abstinence.

All desire to rejoice with Him, but few are willing to endure anything for His sake.

Many follow Jesus to the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking the chalice of His Passion.

Many reverence His miracles, but few follow the ignominy of His Cross.

Many love Jesus as long as they meet with no adversity; many praise Him and bless Him as long as they receive some consolations from Him.

But if Jesus hide Himself, and leave them for a little while, they either murmur or fall into excessive dejection.

2. But they that love Jesus for Jesus' sake and not for the sake of some consolation of their own, bless Him no less in tribulation and anguish of heart than in the greatest consolation.

And if He should never give them consolation, yet would they always praise Him, and always give Him thanks.

3. Oh, how much is the pure love of Jesus able to do, when it is not mixed with any self-interest or self-love!

Are not all they to be called mercenaries who are ever seeking consolations!

Do not they prove themselves to be rather lovers of themselves than of Christ, who are always thinking of their own advantage and gain?

Where shall we find a man that is willing to serve God disinterestedly?

4. Seldom do we find anyone so spiritual as to be stripped of all things.

For who shall be able to find the man that is truly poor in spirit, and divested of attachment to all created things? 'His

value is [as of things that are brought] from afar, and from the remotest coasts.'

If a man give his whole substance, still it is nothing.

And if he do great penance, it is but little.

And if he attain to all knowledge, he is far off still.

And if he have great virtue and very fervent devotion, there is still much wanting to him, namely, the one thing which is supremely necessary for him.

What is that? That having left all things else, he leave also himself, and wholly go out of himself, and retain nothing of self-love.

And when he shall have done all things which he knows he ought to do, let him think that he has done nothing.

5. Let him not make great account of that which may appear much to be esteemed; but let him in truth acknowledge himself to be an unprofitable servant; as the Truth Himself has said: 'When ye shall have done all things that have been commanded you, say: "We are unprofitable servants."'

Then may he be truly poor in spirit, and may say with the Psalmist: 'I am alone and poor.'

Yet is there no one richer than such a man, none more powerful, none more free; who knoweth how to leave himself and all things, and to put himself in the very lowest place.

Chapter XII

Of the Royal Road of the Holy Cross

To many this seemeth a hard saying: 'Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow Jesus.'

But it will be much harder to hear that last word: 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.'

For they who now love to hear and follow the word of the Cross, shall not then fear the sentence of eternal condemnation.

This sign of the Cross shall be in heaven when the Lord shall come to judge.

Then all the servants of the Cross, who in their lifetime have conformed themselves to Him that was crucified, shall come to Christ, their Judge, with great confidence.

2. Why, then, art thou afraid to take up thy cross, which leadeth to the kingdom?

In the Cross is salvation; in the Cross is life; in the Cross is protection from enemies.

In the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the Cross is strength of mind; in the Cross is joy of spirit.

In the Cross is height of virtue; in the Cross is perfection of sanctity.

There is no health of soul, nor hope of eternal life, but in the Cross.

Take up, therefore, thy cross, and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting.

He is gone before thee, carrying His cross, and He died for thee upon the Cross, that thou mayest also bear thy cross and love to die on the Cross.

Because if thou die with Him, thou shalt also live with Him; and if thou art His companion in suffering, thou shalt also be His companion in glory.

3. Behold, in the Cross all doth consist, and all lieth in our dying; and there is no other way to life and to true interior peace, but the way of the holy Cross and of daily mortification.

Go where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, and thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy Cross.

Dispose and order all things according as thou wilt, and as seems best to thee, and thou wilt still find something to suffer, either willingly or unwillingly; and so thou shalt always find the Cross.

For either thou shalt feel pain in the body, or sustain in thy soul tribulation of spirit.

4. Sometimes thou shalt be deserted by God, at other times shalt be afflicted by thy neighbour; and what is more, thou shalt often be a trouble to thyself.

Neither canst thou be delivered or eased by any remedy or comfort; but as long as it shall please God, thou must bear it.

For God willeth that thou learn to suffer tribulation without comfort, and wholly submit thyself to Him, and become more humble by tribulation.

No man hath so heartfelt a sense of the Passion of Christ, as he whose lot it hath been to suffer like things.

The Cross, therefore, is always ready, and everywhere awaiteth thee.

Thou canst not escape it, whithersoever thou runnest; for wheresoever thou goest, thou carriest thyself with thee, and shalt always find thyself.

Turn thyself upward or turn thyself downward; turn thyself inward or turn thyself outward; everywhere thou shalt find the Cross.

And everywhere thou must of necessity hold fast patience, if thou desirest inward peace, and wouldst merit an eternal crown.

5. If thou carry the Cross willingly, it will carry thee, and bring thee to thy desired end, namely, to that place where there will be an end of suffering, though here there will be no end.

If thou carry it unwillingly, thou makest it a burden to thee, and loadest thyself the more, and nevertheless thou must bear it.

If thou fling away one cross, without doubt thou wilt find another, and perhaps a heavier.

6. Dost thou think to escape that which no mortal ever could avoid? What Saint ever was in the world without his cross and tribulation?

For even our Lord Jesus Christ Himself was not for one hour of His life without the anguish of His Passion. 'It behoved,' said He, 'that Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead, and so enter into His glory.'

And how dost thou seek another way than this royal way, which is the way of the holy Cross?

7. The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom; and dost thou seek for thyself rest and joy?

Thou errest, thou errest, if thou seekest aught else than to suffer tribulation; for this whole mortal life is full of miseries, and everywhere marked with crosses.

And the higher a person is advanced in spirit, the heavier crosses shall he often meet with, because the pain of his banishment increaseth in proportion to his love.

8. Yet such a one, thus manyways afflicted, is not without some relief of consolation, because he is sensible of the very great profit he reaps by bearing the Cross.

For whilst he willingly resigns himself to it, all the burden of tribulation is converted into an assured hope of comfort from God.

And the more the flesh is brought down by affliction, the more is the spirit strengthened by interior grace.

And sometimes he gaineth such strength through affection to tribulation and adversity, by his love of conformity to the Cross of Christ, as not to be willing to be without suffering and affliction; because such a one believeth himself to be so much the more acceptable to God, the more and more grievous things he shall have endured for His sake.

This is not man's power, but the grace of Christ, which doth and can effect such great things in frail flesh, that what it naturally abhors and flies, even this, through fervour of spirit, it now embraces and loves.

9. To bear the Cross, to love the Cross, to chastise the body and bring it under subjection; to fly honours, to love to suffer insults, to despise oneself, and wish to be despised; to bear all adversities and losses, and to desire no prosperity in this world —all this is not according to man's natural inclination.

If thou lookest unto thyself, thou canst do nothing of this sort of thyself.

But if thou confidest in the Lord, strength will be given to thee from heaven, and the world and the flesh shall be made subject to thee.

Neither shalt thou fear thine enemy, the devil, if thou art armed with faith, and signed with the Cross of Christ.

10. Set thyself, then, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the Cross of thy Lord, for the love of Him who was crucified for thee.

Prepare thyself to suffer many adversities, and divers evils, in

this miserable life; for so it will be with thee, wherever thou art, and so indeed wilt thou find it, wheresoever thou hide thyself.

It must be so, and there is no remedy against tribulation and sorrow, but to bear them patiently.

Drink of the chalice of thy Lord lovingly, if thou desirest to be His friend and to have part with Him.

Leave consolations to God, to do with them as best pleaseth Him.

But be ready on thy part to bear tribulations, and account them the greatest consolations; for the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, although thou alone couldst suffer them all.

11. When thou shalt arrive thus far, that tribulation shall be sweet to thee, and thou shalt relish it for the love of Christ, then think that it is well with thee, for thou hast found a paradise upon earth.

As long as suffering is grievous to thee, and thou seekest to fly from it, so long shall it be ill with thee; and the [desire of] flying from tribulation shall pursue thee everywhere.

12. If thou set thyself to what thou oughtest, that is, to suffer and to die, it will quickly be better with thee, and thou shalt find peace.

Although thou shouldst have been rapt to the third heaven with St Paul, thou art not thereby secured that thou shalt suffer no adversity: 'I,' said Jesus, 'will show him how great things he must suffer for My name.'

To suffer, therefore, is what awaits thee, if thou art resolved to love Jesus, and constantly to serve Him.

13. Would to God thou wert worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus! how great glory would remain unto thyself! how great joy would it be to all the Saints of God! and how great edification to thy neighbour!

All recommend patience, but alas, how few are there that desire to suffer!

With good reason oughtest thou willingly to suffer for Christ, since many suffer greater things for the world.

14. Know for certain that thou must lead a dying life; and the more a man dieth to himself, the more doth he begin to live unto God.

No man is fit to comprehend heavenly things who hath not resigned himself to suffer adversities for Christ.

Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more salutary for thee in this world, than to suffer willingly for Christ.

And if thou couldst make choice, thou oughtest to prefer to suffer adversities for Christ than to be delighted with much consolation; because thus thou wouldst more resemble Christ and be more likened to all the Saints.

For our merit, and the advancement of our state, consists not in having many sweetnesses and consolations; but rather in bearing great afflictions and tribulations.

If, indeed, there had been anything better and more beneficial to man's salvation than suffering, Christ certainly would have showed it by word and example.

For He manifestly exhorts both His disciples that followed Him, and all that desire to follow Him, to bear the cross, saying: 'If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'

So that when we have read and searched all, let this be the final conclusion, that 'through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.'

BOOK THIRD

CHAPTER I

Of the Internal Discourse of Christ to a Faithful Soul

I WILL hear what the Lord God will speak in me.

Happy is the soul which heareth the Lord speaking within her, and receiveth from His mouth the word of comfort.

Happy ears which receiveth the breathings of the divine whisper, and take no notice of the whisperings of this world.

Happy ears indeed which hearken not to the voice that soundeth without, but to the Truth itself, teaching within.

Happy eyes which are shut to outward things, but intent on things internal.

Happy they who penetrate into internal things, and endeavour to prepare themselves more and more by daily exercises for the receiving of heavenly secrets.

Happy they who rejoice to be wholly intent on God, and who shake off every worldly impediment.

Consider these things, O my soul, and close up the doors of thy sensual desires; that thou mayest hear what the Lord thy God speaketh within thee.

2. Thus saith thy Beloved: I am thy salvation, thy peace, and thy life.

Keep thyself with Me, and thou shalt find peace.

Let go all transitory things: seek the eternal.

What are all things temporal but seductive snares? and what avail all created things, if thou be forsaken by the Creator?

Cast off, then, all earthly things, and make thyself pleasing to thy Creator, and faithful to Him, that so thou mayest lay hold on true happiness.

Chapter II

That Truth Speaketh within us without Noise of Words

SPEAK, Lord, for Thy servant heareth. I am Thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies. Incline my heart to the words of Thy mouth; let Thy speech distill as the dew.

Heretofore the children of Israel said to Moses: Speak thou to us, and we will hear; let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die.

It is not thus, O Lord, it is not thus I pray, but rather, with the Prophet Samuel, I humbly and earnestly entreat: Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.

Let not Moses, nor any of the Prophets, speak to me; but speak Thou rather, O Lord God, the Inspirer and Enlightener of all the Prophets; for Thou alone, without them, canst perfectly instruct me; but they, without Thee, will avail me nothing.

2. They may indeed sound forth words, but they give not the spirit.

Most beautifully do they speak; but if Thou be silent, they inflame not the heart.

They give the letter, but Thou disclosest the sense.

They publish the mysteries, but Thou unlockest the meaning of the things signified.

They declare the commandments, but Thou enablest us to fulfil them.

They show the way, but Thou givest strength to walk in it.

What they can do is only from without, but Thou instructest and enlightenest the heart.

They water outwardly, but Thou givest the increase.

They cry aloud in words, but Thou impartest understanding to the hearing.

3. Let not, then, Moses speak to me, but Thou, O Lord my God, the eternal Truth, lest I die and prove fruitless, if I be admonished only outwardly, and not inflamed within.

Lest it be to my condemnation that the word be heard and not fulfilled, known and not loved, believed and not observed.

Speak then, O Lord, for Thy servant heareth; for Thou hast the words of eternal life.

Speak to me, that it may be some comfort to my soul, and the amendment of my whole life; and also to Thy praise, and glory, and everlasting honour.

Chapter III

That the Words of God are to be Heard with Humility, and that Many Weigh them not

My son, hear My words, words most sweet, excelling all the learning of philosophers, and of the wise men of this world.

My words are spirit and life, and not to be estimated according to human perception.

They are not to be drawn forth for vain complacency, but are to be heard in silence, and to be received with all humility and great affection.

2. And I said: Blessed is the man whom Thou, O Lord, shalt instruct, and shalt teach him Thy law, that thou mayest give him rest from the evil days, and that he may not be desolate upon earth.

I, saith the Lord, have taught the Prophets from the beginning, and even till now I cease not speak to all.

But many are deaf and hardened to My voice.

The greater number listen more willingly to the world than to God; and are readier to follow the desires of their flesh than the good pleasure of God.

The world promiseth things temporal and of small value, and is served with great eagerness; I promise things most excellent and everlasting, and yet men's hearts remain torpid.

3. Who is there that serveth and obeyeth Me in all things with that great care with which the world and its lords are served? Be ashamed, O Sidon, saith the sea.

And if thou ask the cause, hear wherefore.

For a scanty sustenance men run a great way; for eternal life many will scarce lift foot once from the ground.

A petty gain is sought after; for a single coin sometimes men shamefully quarrel; for men will brave toil day and night, yea, for some mere trifle or a slight promise.

4. But, alas! for an unchangeable good, for an inestimable reward, for the highest honour and never-ending glory, they are loath to undergo a little fatigue.

Blush, then, thou slothful, querulous servant, that they are actually more ready to labour for death than thou for life.

They rejoice more in vanity than thou in the truth.

Sometimes, indeed, they are disappointed of their hopes; but My promise deceiveth no man, nor sendeth away empty him that trusteth in Me.

What I have promised I will give, what I have said I will make good, if only a man continue to the end faithful in My love.

I am the Rewarder of all the good, and the mighty Prover of all the devout.

5. Write My words in thy heart, and think diligently on them; for they will be very necessary in the time of temptation.

What thou understandest not when thou readest, thou shalt know in the day of visitation.

I am accustomed to visit My elect in two manner of ways—namely, by trial and by consolation.

And I daily read to them two lessons: one to rebuke their vices, and the other to exhort them to the increase of virtue.

He that hath My words, and slighteth them, hath One who shall judge him at the last day.

A Prayer

To Implore the Grace of Devotion

6. O Lord my God, Thou art all my good; and who am I that I should dare to speak to Thee?

I am Thy most poor servant, and a wretched little worm, much more poor and contemptible than I can conceive or dare express.

Yet remember, O Lord, that I am nothing; I have nothing, and can do nothing.

Thou alone art good, just, and holy; Thou canst do all things; Thou givest all things; Thou fillest all things, leaving only the sinner empty.

Remember Thy tender mercies, and fill my heart with Thy grace, Thou who wilt not that Thy works should be void.

7. How can I support myself in this wretched life, unless Thy mercy and grace strengthen me?

Turn not away Thy face from me, delay not Thy visitation, withdraw not Thy comfort, lest my soul become as earth without water to Thee.

O Lord, teach me to do Thy will; teach me to converse worthily and humbly in Thy sight; for Thou art my wisdom; Thou knowest me in the truth, and didst know me before the world was made, and before I was born in the world.

Chapter IV

That We ought to Walk before God in Truth and Humility

SON, walk before Me in truth; and always seek Me in the simplicity of thy heart.

He that walketh before Me in truth shall be secured from evil incursions, and the Truth shall deliver him from seducers, and from the detractions of the wicked.

If the truth shall have made thee free, thou shalt be indeed free, and shalt make no account of the vain words of men.

Lord, it is true as Thou sayest; so, I beseech Thee, let it be done unto me. Let Thy Truth teach me, let it guard me, and preserve me unto a saving end.

Let it deliver me from all evil affection and inordinate love, and I shall walk with Thee in great freedom of heart.

2. I will teach thee, saith the Truth, those things that are right and pleasing in My sight.

Think on thy sins with great displeasure and sorrow, and never esteem thyself to be anything on account of thy good works.

Of a truth thou art a sinner, subject to, and entangled with many passions.

Of thyself thou always tendest to nothing, speedily dost thou fail, speedily art thou overcome, speedily disturbed, speedily dissolved.

Thou hast not anything in which thou canst glory, but many things for which thou oughtest to abase thyself; for thou art much weaker than thou canst comprehend.

3. Let nothing, then, seem much to thee of all that thou doest.

Let nothing appear great, nothing valuable or admirable, nothing worthy of esteem, nothing high, nothing truly praiseworthy or desirable, but that which is eternal.

Let the eternal Truth please thee above all things, and thy own exceeding great vileness ever displease thee.

Fear nothing so much, blame and flee nothing so much, as thy vices and sins, which ought to displease thee more than the loss of anything whatsoever.

Some persons walk not sincerely before Me; but, led by a

certain curiosity and arrogance, desire to know My secrets, and to understand the high things of God, neglecting themselves and their own salvation.

These often, when I resist them, fall into great temptations and sins, through their pride and curiosity.

4. Fear the judgments of God, dread the anger of the Almighty; yet presume not to examine the works of the Most High, but search diligently thine own iniquities, in how great things thou hast offended, and how much good thou hast neglected.

Some only carry their devotion in their books, some in pictures, and some in outward signs and figures.

Some have Me in their mouths, while there is little of Me in their hearts.

Others there are who, enlightened in their understanding and purified in their affection, always pant after the things eternal, are unwilling to hear of earthly things, and grieve to be subject to the necessities of nature; and such as these perceive what the Spirit of Truth speaketh in them; for it teacheth them to despise the things of the earth, and to love the heavenly things; to disregard the world, and day and night to aspire after heaven.

Chapter V

Of the Wonderful Effect of Divine Love

I BLESS Thee, O heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, because Thou hast vouchsafed to be mindful of me, poor as I am.

O Father of mercies, and God of all consolation, I give thanks to Thee, that sometimes Thou art pleased to cherish with Thy consolation me, who am unworthy of any consolation.

I bless and glorify Thee evermore together with Thy only-begotten Son and the Holy Ghost the Comforter, for ever and ever.

O Lord God, my holy Lover, when thou shalt come into my heart, all that is within me shall be filled with joy.

Thou art my glory and the exultation of my heart.

Thou art my hope and my refuge in the day of my tribulation.

2. But because I am as yet weak in love and imperfect in virtue, therefore do I stand in need of being strengthened and comforted by Thee. Wherefore do Thou visit me often, and instruct me in Thy holy discipline.

Free me from evil passions, and cure my heart of all disorderly affections, so that, inwardly healed and well purified, I may become apt to love, courageous to suffer, and steadfast to persevere.

3. A great thing is love—a great good every way; which alone lighteneth all that is burdensome, and beareth equally all that is unequal.

For it carrieth a burden without being burdened, and maketh all else that is bitter sweet and savoury.

The noble love of Jesus impelleth us to do great things, and exciteth us always to desire that which is the more perfect.

Love will tend upwards, and not be detailed by things beneath.

Love will be at liberty and free from all worldly affection, that its interior vision be not hindered, that it suffer itself not to be entangled with any temporal interest or cast down by misfortune.

Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing higher,

nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven or in earth; for love is born of God, and cannot rest but in God, above all created things.

4. The lover flieth, runneth, and rejoiceth; he is free, and cannot be restrained.

He giveth all for all, and hath all in all, because he resteth in one sovereign Good above all, from whom all good floweth and proceedeth.

He looketh not at the gifts, but turneth himself, above all goods, to the Giver.

Love often knoweth no measure, but groweth fervent above all measure.

Love feeleth no burden, thinketh nothing of labours, would willingly do more than it can, complaineth not of impossibility, because it conceiveth that it may and can do all things.

It can achieve anything; and it doth perform and effect many things, where he that loveth not fainteth and falleth prostrate.

5. Love watcheth, and sleeping slumbereth not.

When weary it is not tired; when straitened is not constrained; when frightened is not disturbed; but, like a vivid flame and a burning torch, it mounteth upwards, and securely passeth through all.

Whosoever loveth, knoweth the cry of this voice.

A loud cry in the ears of God is that ardent affection of the soul which saith: O my God, my Love, Thou art all mine, and I am all Thine.

6. Enlarge Thou me in love, that I may learn to taste with the interior mouth of the heart how sweet it is to love, and to be dissolved and to bathe in love.

Let me be possessed by love, mounting up above myself through excess of fervour and ecstasy.

Let me sing the canticle of love; let me follow Thee, my Beloved, on high; let my soul quite lose herself in Thy praises, jubilant in Thy love.

Let me love Thee more than myself, and myself only for Thee, and all others in Thee, who truly love Thee, as the law of love commandeth, which shineth forth from Thee.

7. Love is swift, sincere, pious, pleasant, and delightful; strong, patient, faithful, prudent, long-suffering, courageous, and never seeking itself.

For where a man seeketh himself, there he falleth from love.

Love is circumspect, humble, upright; not soft, not light, nor

intent upon vain things; is sober, chaste, steadfast, quiet, and keepeth a guard over all the senses.

Love is submissive and obedient to superiors, in its own eyes mean and contemptible, devout and thankful to God, always trusting and hoping in Him, even when it tasteth not the relish of God's sweetness; for there is no living in love without some sorrow.

8. Whosoever is not ready to suffer all things, and to stand resigned to the will of his Beloved, is not worthy to be called a lover.

He that loveth must willingly embrace all that is hard and bitter for the sake of his Beloved, and never suffer himself to be turned away from Him by any contrary occurrences whatsoever.

Chapter VI

Of the Proof of a True Lover

My son, thou art not yet a valiant and a prudent lover.

Why, O Lord?

Because thou fallest off from what thou hast begun upon meeting with a little adversity, and too eagerly seekest after consolation.

A valiant lover standeth his ground in temptations, and yieldeth not to the crafty persuasions of the enemy.

As I please him when in prosperity, so I displease him not in adversity.

2. A prudent lover considereth not so much the gift of the lover as the love of the giver.

He looketh more at the good-will than the value, and setteth every gift beneath the Beloved.

A generous love resteth not in the gift, but in Me, above every gift.

All, therefore, is not lost, if sometimes thou hast not that feeling [of devotion] towards Me or My Saints which thou wouldst have.

That good and delightful affection which thou sometimes perceivest is the effect of present grace, and a certain foretaste of thy heavenly country, upon which thou oughtest not to lean too much, because it goeth and cometh.

But to fight against the evil motions of the mind which arise, and to despise the suggestions of the devil, is a sign of virtue and of great merit.

3. Let not, therefore, strange phantasies of whatever kind suggested trouble thee.

Keep thy resolution firm, and thy intention upright, towards God.

Neither is it an illusion, because sometimes thou art rapt in ecstasy, and presently returnest to the accustomed fooleries of thy heart.

For these thou rather unwillingly bearest with than occasionest; and as long as they displease thee, and thou resistest them, it is merit and not loss.

4. Know that the old enemy striveth by all means to hinder thy desire after good, and to draw thee from every devout exercise—namely, from the veneration of the Saints, from the pious remembrance of My Passion, from the profitable calling to mind of thy sins, from watchfulness over thy own heart, and from a firm purpose of advancing in virtue.

He suggesteth many evil thoughts, that he may cause thee tediousness and horror, that he may call thee away from prayer and holy reading.

He is displeased with humble confession; and if he could, he would cause thee to cease from Communion.

Give no credit to him, care not for him, although he often set for thee a snare of deception.

Charge him with it when he suggests wicked and unclean things, and say to him:

Begone, unclean spirit; be ashamed, miserable wretch; most unclean art thou to suggest such things in my ears.

Depart from me, thou most wicked seducer; thou shalt have no part in me; but Jesus will be with me as a valiant warrior, and thou shalt stand confounded.

I prefer to die and undergo any torment whatsoever, rather than consent to thee.

Hold thy peace and be silent; I will hear thee not further, although thou many times molest me.

The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear?

If whole armies should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. The Lord is my Helper and my Redeemer.

5. Fight like a good soldier; and if sometimes thou fall through frailty, resume greater courage than before, confiding in My more abundant grace. But take very great care against vain complacency and pride.

Through this many are led into error, and sometimes fall into almost incurable blindness.

Let this fall of the proud, foolishly presuming on themselves, serve thee as a warning and keep thee always humble.

Chapter VII

Of Concealing Grace under the Guardianship of Humility

My son, it is both more advantageous and more secure for thee, to keep secret the grace of devotion, and not, therefore, to extol thyself, not to talk much about it, not to ponder it overmuch; but rather to despise thyself the more, and to tremble as if given to one unworthy.

Thou must not tenaciously cleave to such affection as may quickly be changed contrariwise.

Think with thyself, when thou hast grace, how miserable and poor thou art wont to be when deprived of it.

Nor doth progress in spiritual life consist so much in having the grace of consolation, but in bearing the withdrawal of it with humility, self-abnegation and patience; so as not then to grow remiss in the exercise of prayer, nor to suffer thyself to relax from any of thy accustomed good works, but to the best of thy ability and understanding do willingly what lieth in thee, and do not, through any dryness or anxiety of mind which thou feelest, wholly neglect thyself.

2. For many there are who, when things succeed not well with them, presently grow impatient or slothful.

Now the way of man is not always in his own power, but it belongeth to God to give and to console when He willeth, as much as He willeth, and whom He will, just as it shall please Him, and no more.

Some, wanting caution, have ruined themselves by reason of the grace of devotion, because they were for doing more than they could, not weighing well the measure of their own littleness, but following rather the affection of the heart than the judgment of reason.

And as they presumptuously undertook greater things than were pleasing to God, therefore they quickly lost grace.

Needy did they become, and miserably abandoned, who had built themselves a nest in heaven; to the end that, thus humbled and impoverished, they might learn not to fly with their own pinions, but to trust under My wings.

Such as are yet but novices, and inexperienced in the way of

the Lord, unless they govern themselves by the counsel of the discreet, may easily be deceived and lost.

3. And if they will rather follow their own judgment than believe others who have more experience, their end will be perilous, should they still refuse to be withdrawn from their own conceits.

The self-wise rarely endure humbly to be ruled by others.

Better is it to have but little knowledge, with humility and a weak capacity, than great stores of learning with vain complacency.

Better is it to have little than much, whereof thou mightest be proud.

He acts not with sufficient discretion who giveth himself up wholly to joy, forgetting his former poverty and the chaste fear of the Lord, which feareth to lose grace that is proffered.

Neither is he virtuously enough wise who, in time of adversity or any tribulation whatsoever, conducteth himself too despairingly, and thinketh of and reposeth less confidingly in Me than he ought.

4. He who would be too secure in time of peace will often be found too much dejected and fearful in time of war.

If thou couldst always continue humble and little in thine own eyes and keep thy spirit in due order and subjection, thou wouldst not fall so easily into danger and offence.

It is good counsel, that, when thou hast conceived the spirit of fervour, thou shouldst meditate how it will be with thee, when that light shall be withdrawn.

And when this shall happen, remember that the light may return again, which, for a caution to thee and for My glory, I have withdrawn for a time.

5. Such a trial is oftentimes more profitable than if thou wert always to have prosperity according to thy will.

For a man's merits are not to be estimated by his having many visions or consolations, or by his knowledge of Scripture, or by his being placed in a more elevated station.

But by his being grounded in true humility and replenished with divine charity; by his seeking always, purely and entirely, the honour of God; by his esteeming himself to be nothing, and by his sincerely despising himself; and being better pleased to be despised and humbled by others than to be honoured by them.

Chapter VIII

Of the Mean Estimation of Oneself in the Eyes of God

I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am but dust and ashes.

If I repute myself greater than this, behold, Thou standest against me; and my sins bear a true testimony, and I cannot contradict it.

But if I abase myself, and bring myself down to very nothingness, and divest myself of all self-esteem, and reduce myself, as I really am, to mere dust, Thy grace will be favourable to me, and Thy light will draw nigh to my heart; and all self-estimation, how small soever, will be sunk in the depth of my own nothingness, and there lose itself forever.

It is there Thou showest me to myself what I am, what I have been, and to what I am come; for I am nothing, and I knew it not.

If I am left to myself, behold, I am nothing, and all weakness; but if Thou suddenly look upon me, I presently become strong, and am replenished with new joy.

And truly wonderful it is that I am so quickly raised up and so graciously embraced by Thee; I who, by my own weight, am always sinking down to the lowest depths.

2. It is Thy love that effects this, gratuitously preventing and assisting me in so many necessities, preserving me also from grievous dangers, and, as I may truly say, rescuing me from innumerable evils.

For, by a perverse loving of myself, I have lost myself; and by seeking Thee alone, and purely loving Thee, I have found both myself and Thee; and by this love more profoundly annihilated myself.

Because Thou, O most sweet Lord, dost deal with me above all desert, and above all that I dare hope or ask for.

3. Blessed be Thou, O my God; for though I am unworthy of all good, yet Thy generosity and infinite goodness never cease to do good even to those that are ungrateful, and that are turned far away from Thee.

Oh, convert us unto Thee, that we may be humble, thankful, and devout; for Thou art our salvation, our courage, and our strength.

Chapter IX

That all Things are to be Referred to God, as to our Last End

Son, I must be thy supreme and ultimate end, if thou desirest to be truly happy.

By this intention shall thy affections be purified, which too often are irregularly bent upon thyself and things created.

For if in anything thou seekest thyself, thou presently faintest away within thyself, and groweth dry.

Principally, therefore, refer all things to Me; for it is I that have given thee all.

Consider each thing as flowing from the sovereign Good; and therefore all must be returned to Me, as to their origin.

2. Out of Me both little and great, poor and rich, as out of a living fountain, draw living water; and they who freely and willingly serve Me shall receive grace for grace.

But he who would glory in anything else beside Me, or delight in any good as his own, shall not be established in true joy, nor enlarged in his heart, but in many ways shall be impeded and straitened.

Therefore thou must not ascribe any good to thyself, nor attribute virtue to any man; but give all to God, without whom man has nothing.

I, who have given all, will also have all again; and with great strictness do I require a return of thanks.

3. This is that truth by which all vain glory is put to flight.

And if heavenly grace and true charity come in, there shall be no envy nor narrowness of heart, nor shall self-love keep possession.

For divine charity overcometh all, and enlargeth all the powers of the soul.

If thou art truly wise, thou wilt rejoice in Me alone, thou wilt hope in Me alone; for none is good but God alone, who is to be praised above all, and to be blessed in all.

Chapter X

That it is Sweet to Despise the World and to Serve God

Now will I speak again, O Lord, and will not be silent; I will say in the hearing of my God and my King who is on high:

Oh, how great is the abundance of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for those that fear Thee!

But what art Thou to those that love Thee? what to those that serve Thee with their whole heart?

Unspeakable, indeed, is the sweetness of Thy contemplation, which Thou bestowest on those that love Thee.

In this most of all hast Thou showed me the sweetness of Thy love, that when I had no being Thou didst make me, and when I was straying far from Thee Thou broughtest me back again that I might serve Thee, and Thou hast commanded me to love Thee.

2. O Fountain of everlasting love, what shall I say of Thee?

How can I ever forget Thee, who hast vouchsafed to remember me even after that I was corrupted and was lost?

Beyond all hope hast Thou shown mercy to Thy servant; and beyond all desert hast Thou manifested Thy grace and friendship.

What return shall I make to Thee for this favour? for it is not granted to all to forsake all things, to renounce the world, and to assume the monastic life.

It is much that I should serve Thee, whom the whole creation is bound to serve?

It ought not to seem much to me to serve Thee; but this rather doth appear great and wonderful to me, that Thou vouchsafest to receive one so wretched and unworthy for Thy servant, and to unite Him to Thy Beloved.

3. Behold all things are Thine which I have, and with which I serve Thee.

And yet contrariwise Thou rather servest me than I Thee.

Lo! heaven and earth, which Thou hast created for the service of man, stand prepared, and daily perform whatsoever Thou hast commanded.

And this is but little; for Thou hast also created and appointed angels for the service of man.

But what transcendeth all this is, that Thou Thyself hast vouchsafed to serve man, and hast promised that Thou wilt give him Thyself.

4. What shall I give Thee for all these thousand favours? Would that I could serve Thee all the days of my life!

Would that I were able, were it but for one day, to render Thee worthy homage!

Verily Thou art worthy of all service, of all honour, and of eternal praise.

Thou art truly my Lord, and I am Thy poor servant, who am bound with all my strength to serve Thee, and ought never to grow weary of praising Thee.

This is my will, this is my desire; and whatever is wanting in me do Thou vouchsafe to supply.

5. It is a great honour, a great glory, to serve Thee, and to despise all things for Thee.

For they who willingly subject themselves to Thy most holy service shall have great grace.

They shall experience the most sweet consolation of the Holy Spirit, who, for the love of Thee, have cast away all carnal delight.

They shall gain great freedom of mind, who for Thy name enter upon the narrow way, and relinquish all worldly care.

6. O pleasant and delightful service of God, which maketh a man truly free and holy!

O sacred state of religious servitude, which maketh men equal to angels, pleasing to God, terrible to the devils, and commendable to all the faithful!

O servitude lovely and ever to be desired, in which we are rewarded with the greatest good, and joy is acquired that will never end!

Chapter XI

That the Desires of our Heart are to be Examined and Moderated

SON, it behoves thee still to learn many things which thou hast not yet well learned.

2. What are these, Lord?

3. That thou conform in all things thy desire to My good pleasure: and that thou be not a lover of thyself, but earnestly zealous that My will may be done.

Desires often inflame thee, and vehemently impel thee: but consider whether it be for My honour or thy own interest that thou art most moved.

If I am the cause, thou wilt be well contented with whatever I shall ordain, but if there lurk in thee any self-seeking, behold, this it is that hindereth thee and weigheth thee down.

4. Take care, then, not to rely too much upon any preconceived desire before thou hast consulted Me; lest perhaps afterwards thou repent, or be displeased with that which at first pleased thee, and which thou wast zealous for as the best.

For not every inclination which appeareth good is therefore at once to be followed; nor is every contrary affection at once to be rejected.

Even in good intentions and desires it is expedient sometimes to use some restraint, lest by too much eagerness thou incur distraction of mind, lest for want of discipline thou generate scandal to others; or by opposition from others thou be suddenly disturbed and fall.

5. Sometimes, indeed, we must use violence and manfully resist the sensual appetite, and not regard what the flesh liketh or disliketh, but rather endeavour that, even against its will, it may be subject to the spirit.

And so long must it be chastised and kept under servitude, till it readily obey in all things, and learn to be content with a little, and to be pleased with simplicity, and not to murmur at any inconvenience.

Chapter XII

Of Acquiring Patience and of Striving against Concupiscence

O LORD GOD, patience, as I perceive, is very necessary for me, for many adverse things happen to us in this life.

For in whatsoever way I may arrange for my peace, my life cannot be without war and sorrow.

2. My son, so it is; for I would not have thee seek for such a peace as to have no temptations, or to feel no adversity; but then, indeed, think thou hast found peace, when thou shalt be exercised in divers tribulations, and tried in much adversity.

If thou shalt say thou art not able to suffer much, how then wilt thou endure the fire of purgatory?

Of two evils, one ought always to choose the less.

That thou mayest, therefore, escape the future eternal punishment, endeavour patiently to endure present evils for God's sake.

Thinkest thou that men of the world suffer nothing or but little? Thou shalt not find it so, though thou seek out the most voluptuous.

3. But sayest thou, they follow after many delights, and withal their own will, and therefore make small account of their tribulations?

4. Be it so, that they have all they desire; but how long thinkest thou this will last?

Behold, as smoke shall they vanish that abound in this world, and there shall be no remembrance of their past joys.

Nay, even whilst they live, they rest not in the possession of them without bitterness, weariness, and fear.

From the very same thing whence they conceive delight, thence frequently do they derive the penalty of anguish.

It is just with them it should be so, that since they seek and follow inordinately their pleasures, they should not enjoy them without confusion and bitterness.

Oh, how short, how deceitful, how inordinate and shameful are all these pleasures!

Yet, through sottishness and blindness, men understand this

not, but like dumb animals, for the poor pleasures of this mortal life, they incur the death of the soul.

But thou, my son, go not after thy concupiscence, but turn away from thy own will.

Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the desires of thy heart.

5. For if thou wouldst in truth taste of delight and be abundantly comforted by Me, behold, in the contempt of all things worldly, and in the cutting off of every sordid gratification, shall thy blessing be, and consolation most abundant be rendered to thee.

And the more thou withdrawest thyself from all solace of creatures, the sweeter and the more powerful consolations wilt thou find in Me.

But thou shalt not attain to these at first without some sorrow and labour of conflict.

Long-standing custom will make resistance, but by a better habit shall it be subdued.

The flesh will complain, but by fervour of spirit shall it be reined in.

The old serpent will instigate thee, and trouble thee anew; but by prayer he shall be put to flight; moreover, by useful employment his greater access to thee shall be prevented.

Chapter XIII

Of the Obedience of an Humble Subject, after the Example of Jesus Christ

Son, he who striveth to withdraw himself from obedience, withdraweth himself from grace; and he that seeketh particular privileges loseth such as are in common.

He who doth not freely and willingly submit himself to his superior, it is a sign that his flesh is not as yet perfectly obedient to him, but oftentimes rebelleth and murmureth.

Learn, then, to submit thyself readily to thy superior, if thou desire to subdue thy own flesh.

For sooner is the exterior enemy overcome, if the inward man be not laid waste.

There is not a more troublesome or worse enemy to the soul than thou thyself art, when not well agreeing with the spirit.

Thou must in good earnest conceive a true contempt of thyself, if thou wilt prevail against flesh and blood.

Because as yet thou lovest thyself too inordinately, therefore dost thou fear to resign thyself entirely to the will of others.

2. But what great matter is it, if thou who art but dust and a mere nothing, submit thyself to man for God's sake, when I, the Almighty and the Most High, who created all things out of nothing, have for thy sake humbly subjected Myself to man?

I became the most humble and most abject of all men, that thou mightest overcome thy pride by My humility.

Learn, O dust, to obey; learn to humble thyself, earth and clay, and to bow under the feet of all.

Learn to break thy own will, and to yield thyself up to all subjection.

3. Kindle wrath against thyself, suffer not the swelling of pride to live in thee; but show thyself so submissive and little that all may trample on thee, and tread thee under their feet as the dirt of the streets.

What hast thou, vain man, to complain of?

What answer, wretched sinner, canst thou make to those that reproach thee—thou who hast so often offended God, and so very many times deserved hell?

But Mine eye hath spared thee, because thy soul was precious in My sight; that thou mightest know My love, and mightest always live thankful for My favours; and that thou mightest continually give thyself to true subjection and humility, and bear patiently thy own contempt.

Chapter XIV

Of Considering the Secret Judgments of God, that We be not Puffed up with our Own Good Works

Thou thunderest forth over my head Thy judgments, O Lord, and Thou shakest all my bones with fear and trembling, and my soul is terrified exceedingly.

I stand astonished, and consider that the heavens are not pure in Thy sight.

If in the angels Thou hast found depravity, and hast not spared them, what will become of me?

Stars have fallen from heaven; and I, dust as I am, how can I presume?

They whose works seemed praiseworthy have fallen to the very lowest; and those that did eat the bread of angels I have seen delighted with the husks of swine.

2. There is no sanctity, if Thou, O Lord, withdraw Thy hand.

No wisdom avails, if Thou cease to govern us.

No strength is of any help, if Thou cease to preserve us.

No chastity is secure without Thy protection.

No self-custody profits us, if Thy holy vigilance be not nigh unto us.

For left to ourselves, we sink and perish; but by Thee visited, we are raised up and live.

For we are unsteadfast, but by Thee we are strengthened; we are tepid, but by Thee we are inflamed.

3. Oh, how humbly and lowly ought I to think of myself; of how little worth, whatever good I may seem to have!

Oh, how profoundly ought I to abase myself, under Thy unfathomable judgments, O Lord, where I find myself to be nothing else but nothing, and altogether nothing!

O weight immense! O sea that cannot be passed over, where I find nothing of myself but only and wholly nothing!

Where, then, is there any lurking-place for glorying? where any confidence conceived of my own virtue?

All vain glory is swallowed up in the profundity of Thy judgments over me.

4. What is all flesh in Thy sight?

Shall the clay glory against Him that formed it?

How can he be puffed up with vain talk whose heart is subjected to God in truth?

All the world will not lift him up whom the truth hath subjected to itself.

Neither will he be moved with the tongues of all that praise him, who hath settled his whole hope in God.

For even they who speak, behold, they are all nothing, for they shall pass away with the sound of their words; but the truth of the Lord remaineth forever.

Chapter XV

How We are to be Disposed, and what We are to Say, when We Desire Anything

My son, say this on every occasion: Lord, if it be pleasing to Thee, so let it be.

Lord, if it be to Thy honour, let this be done in Thy name.

Lord, if Thou seest that this is expedient, and approvest it as profitable for me, then grant that I may use it to Thy honour.

But if Thou knowest that it will be hurtful to me, and not profitable for the salvation of my soul, take away from me such a desire.

For not every desire is from the Holy Ghost, though to man it seems right and good.

It is difficult to judge truly whether it be a good or evil spirit that impelleth thee to desire this or that, or whether thou art not moved to it by thy own spirit.

Many in the end have been deceived, who at first seemed to be led by a good spirit.

2. Whatsoever, therefore, occurreth to thy mind as worthy to be desired, it must be always with the fear of God and humility of heart that thou desire and ask for it.

And above all thou oughtest, with self-resignation, to commit all to Me, and to say:

Lord, Thou knowest what is best; let this or that be done as Thou wilt.

Give what Thou wilt and as much as Thou wilt, and at what time Thou wilt.

Do with me as Thou knowest, and as best pleaseth Thee, and is most for Thy honour.

Put me where Thou wilt, and do with me in all things according to Thy will.

I am in Thy hand; turn me hither and thither as Thou choosest.

Lo, I am Thy servant, ready for all things; for I do not desire to live for myself, but for Thee; oh, that I could do so in a worthy and perfect manner!

A Prayer

For Fulfilling the Will of God

3. Grant me Thy grace, most merciful Jesus, that it may be with me, and labour with me, and continue with me unto the end.

Grant me always to will and desire that which is most acceptable to Thee, and which pleaseth Thee best.

Let Thy will be mine, and let my will always follow Thine, and agree perfectly with it.

Let me always will or not will the same with Thee: and let me not be able to will or not to will otherwise than as Thou willest or willest not.

4. Grant that I may die to all things that are in the world, and for Thy sake love to be despised, and to be unknown in this world.

Grant unto me, above all things to be desired, that I may rest in Thee, and that my heart may be at peace in Thee.

Thou art the true peace of the heart; Thou art its only rest; out of Thee all things are hard and restless.

In this peace, in the selfsame, that is, in Thee, the one sovereign eternal Good, I will sleep and take my rest. Amen.

Chapter XVI

That the True Consolation is to be Sought in God Alone

WHATSOEVER I can desire or imagine for my comfort, I look not for here, but hereafter.

For if I alone should have all the comfort of this world, and might enjoy all its delights, certain it is they could not last long.

Wherefore thou canst not, O my soul, be fully comforted nor perfectly refreshed, except in God, the comforter of the poor and the receiver of the humble.

Wait a little while, my soul, wait for the divine promise, and thou wilt have abundance of all good things in heaven.

If thou desirest too inordinately these present things, thou wilt lose those that are heavenly and eternal.

Use temporal things, but desire eternal.

Thou canst not be satisfied with any temporal goods, because thou wast not created for their enjoyment.

2. Although thou shouldst have all created goods, thou couldst not be happy and blessed; but in God, who created all things, consists all thy beatitude and happiness.

Not such as is seen or cried up by the foolish lovers of the world, but such as the good faithful of Christ await, and of which they that are spiritual and clean of heart, whose conversation is in heaven, have sometimes a foretaste.

All human comfort is vain and short.

Blessed and true is that comfort which is derived inwardly from Truth.

A devout man everywhere carrieth about with him Jesus his Consoler, and saith to Him: Be with me, O Lord Jesus, in all places and at all times.

Let this be my consolation, to be freely willing to forego all human comfort.

And if Thy comfort be withdrawn, let Thy will and just trial be to me as the greatest of comforts.

For Thou wilt not always be angry, nor wilt Thou threaten forever.

Chapter XVII

That all Solicitude must be Placed in God

Son, suffer Me to do with thee what I will; I know what is expedient for thee.

Thou thinkest as man; thou judgest in many things as human affection suggesteth.

Lord, what Thou sayest is true. Greater is Thy care for me than all the care I can take of myself.

For at too great a hazard doth he stand, who casteth not his whole care on Thee.

Lord, provided that my will remain true and firm towards Thee, do with me whatsoever it shall please Thee.

For it cannot but be good, whatever Thou shalt do with me.

2. If Thou wilt have me to be in darkness, be Thou blessed; and if Thou wilt have me to be in light, be Thou again blessed; if Thou vouchsafe to comfort me, be Thou blessed; and if it be Thy will I should be afflicted, be Thou still equally blessed.

3. Son, thus must thou stand affected, if thou desire to walk with Me.

Thou must be as ready to suffer as to rejoice; thou must be as glad to be poor and needy as to be full and rich.

3. Lord, I will suffer willingly for Thee whatsoever Thou art pleased should befall me.

I am willing indifferently to receive from Thy hand good and evil, sweet and bitter, joy and sorrow, and to give Thee thanks for all that happeneth to me.

Keep me from all sin, and I will fear neither death nor hell.

So that Thou cast me not off for ever, nor blot me out of the book of life, what tribulation soever befalleth me shall not hurt me.

Chapter XVIII

That Temporal Miseries are to be Borne with Equanimity after the Example of Christ

Son, I came down from heaven for thy salvation; I took upon Me thy miseries, not of necessity, but moved thereto by charity, that thou mightest learn patience and bear without repining temporal miseries.

For from the hour of my birth until I expired upon the Cross I was not without the endurance of grief; moreover, I suffered great want of all earthly things.

I frequently heard many complants against Me; I meekly bore disgrace and reproaches; for benefits I received ingratitude; for miracles, blasphemies; for heavenly doctrine, reproofs.

2. Lord, because Thou wast patient in Thy lifetime, herein especially fulfilling the commandment of Thy Father, it is fitting that I, a wretched sinner, should, according to Thy will, bear myself patiently and, as long as Thou pleasest, support the burden of this corruptible life, in order to my salvation.

For though this present life is felt to be burdensome, yet it is now rendered, through Thy grace, very meritorious; and by Thy example and the footsteps of Thy Saints, more bright and supportable to the weak.

It is also much more full of consolation than it was formerly under the law, when the gate of heaven remained shut; and even the way to heaven seemed more obscure, when so few concerned themselves to seek the kingdom of heaven.

Moreover, too, they who were then just, and to be saved, could not enter into Thy heavenly kingdom before Thy Passion and the payment of our debt by Thy sacred death.

3. Oh, what great thanks am I bound to render unto Thee, for having vouchsafed to show me and all the faithful a right and good way to Thine everlasting kingdom!

For Thy life is our way; and by holy patience we walk on to Thee, who art our crown.

If Thou hadst not gone before and instructed us, who would have cared to follow?

Alas, how many would have stayed afar off and a great way behind, had they not before their eyes Thy glorious example!

Behold, we are still tepid, notwithstanding all Thy miracles and instructions which we have heard; what, then, would it be if we had not so great light to follow Thee?

Chapter XIX

Of Supporting Injuries; and who is Proved to be Truly Patient

WHAT is it thou sayest, my son? Cease to complain, and consider My Passion, and that of the other Saints. Thou hast not yet resisted unto blood.

Little is it that thou sufferest, in comparison of those who have suffered so much; who have been so strongly tempted, so grievously afflicted, so manyways tried and exercised.

Thou oughtest, then, to call to mind the heaviest sufferings of others, that thou mayest the easier bear the very little things thou sufferest.

And if to thee they seem not little, take heed lest this also proceed from thy impatience.

But whether they be little or great, strive to bear them all with patience.

2. The better thou disposest thyself for suffering, the more wisely dost thou act, and the more dost thou merit; and thou wilt bear it more easily if, both in mind and by habit, thou art diligently prepared thereto.

Do not say, I cannot endure these things from such a man, and things of this kind are not to be suffered by me, for he hath done me a great injury, and he upbraideth me with things I never thought of; but I will suffer willingly from another, and as far as I shall judge fitting for me to suffer.

Such a thought is foolish, which considereth not the virtue of patience nor by whom it shall be crowned, but rather weigheth the persons and the offences committed.

3. He is not a truly patient man who will suffer nothing, only so much as he shall think fit, and from whom he pleaseth.

The truly patient man mindeth not by what manner of man it is he is exercised, whether by his own superior, whether by an equal, or an inferior; whether by a good and holy man, or by one that is perverse and unworthy.

But how much soever and how often soever any adversity happeneth to him from any creature, he taketh it all equally with

thanksgiving, as from the hand of God, and esteemeth it a great gain.

For with God not anything, how trifling soever, suffered for God's sake, shall go unrewarded.

4. Be thou, therefore, prepared to fight, if thou desirest to gain the victory.

Without conflict thou canst not attain the crown of patience.

If thou wilt not suffer, thou refusest to be crowned; but if thou desirest to be crowned, fight manfully, and endure patiently.

Without labour there is no coming to rest, nor without fighting do we arrive at victory.

5. Make, O Lord, that possible to me by grace, which seemeth impossible to me by nature.

Thou knowest how little I can bear, and that I am soon dejected when a small adversity ariseth.

Let all exercises of tribulation become lovely and most desirable to me for Thy Name's sake; for to suffer and to be afflicted for Thee is very healthful for my soul.

Chapter XX

Of the Confession of our Own Infirmity, and of the Miseries of this Life

I will confess against myself my injustice; I will confess to Thee, O Lord, my infirmity.

It is oftentimes a small thing which casteth me down and troubleth me.

I purpose to behave myself valiantly, but when a small temptation cometh, I am brought into great straits.

It is sometimes a very trifling thing whence a grievous temptation proceedeth.

And when I think myself somewhat safe, when I least apprehend it, I find myself sometimes almost overcome by a light blast.

2. Behold, then, O Lord, my abjection and frailty, every way known to Thee.

Have pity on me, and draw me out of the mire, that I stick not fast therein, that I may not be utterly cast down for ever.

This it is which often drives me back, and confounds me in Thy sight, that I am so subject to fall, and so powerless to resist my passions.

And although I do not altogether consent, yet their assaults are troublesome and grievous to me; and I am weary of thus always living in conflict.

Hence my infirmity is made known to me, because abominable imaginations much more easily rush in upon me than they forsake me.

3. Oh, that Thou, most mighty God of Israel, zealous Lover of faithful souls, wouldst regard the labour and sorrow of Thy servant, and stand by him in all his undertakings!

Strengthen me with heavenly fortitude, lest the old man, the miserable flesh not fully subdued to the spirit, prevail and get the upper hand, against which we must battle so long as we breathe in this most wretched life.

Alas, what kind of life is this, where afflictions and miseries are never wanting, where all things are full of snares and enemies!

For, when one tribulation or temptation is gone, another

approacheth; yea, and whilst the first conflict still lasteth, many others come on, and those unexpected.

4. And how is it possible that the life of man can be loved, which hath so great bitterness, and is subject to so many calamities and miseries?

How even can it be called life, which generateth so many deaths and plagues?

And yet it is loved, and many seek their delight in it.

The world is censured as deceitful and vain; and yet it is with reluctance abandoned, because the concupiscence of the flesh too much prevails.

But some things draw us to love the world, others to despise it.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life draw us to the love of the world; but the pains and miseries which justly follow these things breed a hatred and loathing of the world.

5. But, alas, evil delights prevail over a mind that is given to the world and under thorns she imagineth there are delights, because she hath neither seen nor tasted the sweetness of God nor the internal pleasure of virtue.

But such as perfectly despise the world, and study to live to God under holy discipline, they are not unconscious of that divine sweetness promised to those who forsake all; and they clearly see both how grievously the world is mistaken, and in how many ways it is deceived.

Chapter XXI

That We are to Rest in God above all Goods and Gifts

Above all things, and in all things, do thou, my soul, rest always in the Lord, for He is the eternal rest of the Saints. Give me, O most sweet and loving Jesus, to repose in Thee above all things created; above all health and beauty; above all glory and honour; above all power and dignity; above all knowledge and subtlety; above all riches and arts; above all joy and gladness; above all fame and praise; above all sweetness and consolation; above all hope and promise; above all merit and desire; above all gifts and presents that Thou canst give and infuse; above all joy and jubilation that the mind can contain or feel; in fine, above all angels and archangels, and all the host of heaven; above all things visible and invisible; and above all that is not Thee, my God; for Thou, O Lord my God, art supremely good above all things.

2. Thou alone art most high; Thou alone most powerful; Thou alone most full and most sufficient; Thou alone most sweet and most full of consolation.

Thou alone most beautiful and most loving; Thou alone most noble and most glorious above all things; in whom are all that are both good and perfect, and always have been and always will be.

And therefore all is too little and insufficient, whatever Thou bestowest upon me, that is not Thyself; and whatever Thou revealest to me concerning Thyself, or promisest, as long as I see Thee not, nor fully possess Thee: because indeed my heart cannot truly rest, nor be entirely contented, till it rest in Thee, and transcend every gift and every creature.

3. O my most beloved Spouse, Christ Jesus, most pure Lover, Lord of the whole creation, who will give me wings of true liberty, to fly and repose in Thee?

Oh, when shall it be fully granted me to be free, and to see how sweet Thou art, O Lord my God?

When shall I fully collect myself in Thee, that through Thy love I may not feel myself, but Thee alone, above all feeling and measure, in a manner not known to all?

But now I often lament, and bear with grief my unhappiness.

Because many evils happen in this vale of miseries, which frequently disturb me, afflict me, and cast a cloud over me; often do they hinder and distract me, allure and entangle me, so that I can neither have free access to Thee, nor enjoy Thy sweet embraces, which are ever present to blessed spirits.

Oh, let my sighs move Thee, and this my manifold desolation upon earth.

4. O Jesus, brightness of eternal glory, comfort of the pilgrim soul, with Thee is my mouth without voice, and my silence speaketh to Thee.

How long doth my Lord delay to come? Let him come to me, His poor servant, and make me joyful. Let Him stretch forth His hand, and deliver me, wretched, from all anguish.

Come, oh, come, for without Thee I can never have one joyful day nor hour; for Thou art my joy, and without Thee my table is empty.

I am miserable, and in a manner imprisoned, and weighed down with fetters, till with the light of Thy presence Thou comfortest me, givest me liberty, and showest me Thy friendly countenance.

5. Let others seek, instead of Thee, whatever else they please; but nothing else meanwhile doth or shall please me, but Thou, my God, my hope, my eternal salvation.

I will not hold my peace, nor will I cease to pray, till Thy grace return, and Thou sayest interiorly to me:

6. Behold, here I am; behold, I come to thee, because thou hast called Me.

Thy tears, and the desire of thy soul, thy humiliation and contrition of heart, have inclined and brought Me to thee.

7. And I said, O Lord, I have called upon Thee, and have desired to enjoy Thee, and am prepared to reject all things for Thy sake.

For Thou didst first stir me up that I should seek Thee.

Be Thou therefore blessed, O Lord, who hath showed this goodness to Thy servant, according to the multitude of Thy mercies.

What more hath Thy servant to say in Thy presence but to humble himself exceedingly before Thee, mindful always of his own iniquity and vileness?

For there is none like unto Thee amongst all the wonders of heaven and earth.

Thy words are exceedingly good, Thy judgments true, and by Thy providence the universe is ruled.

Praise, therefore, and glory be to Thee, O Wisdom of the Father; let my tongue, my soul, and all things created join in praising and blessing Thee.

Chapter XXII

Of the Remembrance of the Manifold Benefits of God

Open, O Lord, my heart in Thy law, and teach me to walk in Thy commandments.

Give me to understand Thy will, and to commemorate with great reverence and diligent consideration all Thy benefits, as well in general as in particular, that so henceforward I may be able worthily to return thanks for them.

I know, and confess, indeed, that I am not able to return Thee due thanks of praise, not even for the least.

I am less than any of Thy benefits bestowed upon me; and when I consider Thy excellency, my spirit fainteth before the greatness thereof.

2. All things that we have in soul and body, and whatsoever outwardly and inwardly, naturally or supernaturally we possess, are Thy benefits and celebrate Thy bounty, mercy, and goodness, from whom we have received all good.

Although one hath received more, another less, yet all are Thine, and without Thee even the least cannot be had.

He who hath received greater things, cannot glory of his own merit, nor extol himself above others, nor exult over the lesser; because he is indeed greater and better, who attributeth less to himself, and is humble and devout in returning thanks.

And he who esteemeth himself the vilest of all men, and judgeth himself the most unworthy, is fitted to receive still greater blessings.

3. But he who hath received fewer, ought not to be saddened, nor take it ill, nor envy him that is more enriched, but attend rather to Thee, and very much praise Thy goodness, for that Thou bestowest Thy gifts so plentifully, so freely and willingly, without acceptance of persons.

All things are from Thee, and therefore Thou art to be praised in all.

Thou knowest what is expedient to be given to each; and why this one hath less, and the other more, is not ours to decide, but Thine, with whom are determined the merits of each.

4. Wherefore, O Lord God, I deem it a great benefit not to

have much, which outwardly and according to men might appear praiseworthy and glorious; so that a person, considering his own poverty and meanness, ought to be so far from conceiving thereat despondency, or sadness, or dejection, that he should rather take consolation and great joy.

For Thou, O God, hast chosen the poor and the humble, and those that are despised by this world for Thy familiar friends and domestics.

The Apostles themselves are witnesses, whom Thou hast appointed rulers over the whole earth.

And yet they lived in this world without complaint, so humble and simple, without any malice or guile, that they even rejoiced to suffer reproaches for Thy name; and what things the world flies from, those they embraced with great affection.

5. Nothing, therefore, ought to give so great a joy to one that loveth Thee and knoweth Thy benefits, as the accomplishment of Thy will in himself, and the good pleasure of Thy eternal appointment.

With which He ought to be so far contented and comforted as to be as willing to be the least as any one would wish to be the greatest; to enjoy as much peace and content in the lowest place as in the highest; and to be as willing to be despicable and mean and of no name and repute, as to be more honourable and of greater rank in the world than others.

For Thy will and the love of Thy honour ought to take precedence of all things, and to comfort and please one more than any benefits whatsoever which have been or can be given.

Chapter XXIII

Of Four Things which Bring much Peace

Son, now will I teach thee the way of peace and of true liberty.

2. Do, Lord, as Thou sayest, for I shall be very glad to hear it.

3. Study, My son, to do rather the will of another than thy own.

Ever choose rather to have less than more.

Always seek the lowest place, and to be subject to every one.

Desire always and pray that the will of God may be entirely fulfilled in thee.

Behold, such a one entereth within the borders of peace and rest.

4. Lord, this Thy short address containeth in itself much perfection.

It is short in words, but full in meaning, and abounding in fruit.

If I could but faithfully observe it, I should not be so easily troubled.

For as often as I find myself disquieted and disturbed, I am sensible it is because I have gone back from this doctrine.

But Thou, O Lord, who canst do all things, and always lovest the profit of the soul, increase in me a greater grace, that I may fulfil this Thy word and accomplish my salvation.

A Prayer

Against Evil Thoughts

5. O Lord my God, depart not far from me; O my God, have regard to help me; for divers evil thoughts have risen up against me, and great fears afflict my soul.

How shall I pass through them without hurt? how shall I break them in pieces?

6. I, saith He, will go before thee, and will humble the great ones of the earth.

I will open the gates of the prison, and will reveal to thee hidden secrets.

7. Do, Lord, as Thou sayest, and let all wicked thoughts fly from before Thy face.

This is my hope and my only comfort, to fly to Thee in all tribulations, to confide in Thee, to call on Thee from my inmost heart, and patiently to expect Thy consolation.

A Prayer

For the Enlightening of the Mind

8. Enlighten me, O good Jesus, with the brightness of internal light, and draw off all darkness from the dwelling of my heart.

Restrain my many wandering thoughts, and destroy the temptations that violently assault me.

Fight strongly for me, and overcome these evil beasts—I mean, these alluring concupiscences—that peace may be made in Thy power, and the abundance of Thy praise may resound in Thy holy court—that is, in a clean conscience.

Command the winds and storms; say to the sea, Be still; to the north wind, Blow thou not; and there shall be great calm.

9. Send forth Thy light and Thy truth, that they may shine upon the earth; for I am an earth that is empty and void, till Thou enlightenest me.

Pour forth Thy grace from above; water my heart with dew of heaven; supply fresh waters of devotion, to irrigate the face of the earth, to bring forth good and perfect fruit.

Lift up my mind, oppressed with the load of sins, and raise my whole desire towards heavenly things; that having tasted the sweetness of supernal happiness, I may have no pleasure in thinking of the things of earth.

10. Snatch me away, and rescue me from all unstable comfort of creatures; for no created thing can fully quiet and satisfy my desire.

Join me to Thyself with an inseparable bond of love; for thou alone art sufficient for the soul that loveth Thee, and without Thee all other things are frivolous.

Chapter XXIV

Of Avoiding Curious Inquiry Respecting the Life of Others

Son, be not curious, and give not way to useless cares. What is this or that to thee? Follow thou Me. For what is it to thee whether that man be such or such, or whether this man do or speak this or that?

Thou dost not need to answer for others, but thou shalt for thyself give an account; why, therefore, dost thou meddle with them?

Behold, I know all men, and see all things that are done under the sun; and I know how it is with every one—what he thinks, what he would have, and at what his intention aims.

To Me, therefore, are all things to be committed; but do thou keep thyself in good peace; and let the unquiet be as unquiet as he will.

Whatsoever he shall do or say, will come upon himself, because he cannot deceive Me.

Be not solicitous for the shadow of a great name, nor for acquaintance with many, nor for the particular love of individuals.

For these things generate distractions and great darkness in the heart.

I would gladly speak My word to thee, and reveal My secrets, if thou wouldst diligently observe My coming, and open to Me the door of thy heart.

Be circumspect, and watch in prayers, and humble thyself in all things.

Chapter XXV

In what Firm Peace of the Heart and True Progress doth Consist

SON, I have said: Peace I leave to you, My peace I give to you; not as the word giveth do I give to you.

Peace all desire; but all care not for those things which appertain to true peace.

My peace is with the humble and meek of heart: thy peace shall be in much patience.

If thou wilt hear Me, and follow My voice, thou mayest enjoy much peace.

2. What, then, shall I do, Lord?

3. In everything attend to thyself what thou art doing, and what thou art saying; and direct thy whole attention to this, that thou mayest please Me alone and neither desire nor seek anything out of Me.

And as for the sayings or doings of others, judge nothing rashly, neither busy thyself with things not committed to thy care; and thus may it be brought about that thou shalt be little or seldom disturbed.

But never to feel any grief at all, nor to suffer any trouble of heart or body, is not the state of this present life, but of everlasting rest.

Think not, therefore, that thou hast found true peace, if thou feel no burden; nor that then all is well, if thou have no adversary; nor that thou hast attained to perfection, if all things be done according to thy inclination.

Neither do thou conceive a great notion of thyself, or imagine thyself to be especially beloved, if thou experience great devotion and sweetness; for it is not in such things as these that a true lover of virtue is known; nor doth the progress and perfection of a man consist in these things.

4. In what, then, O Lord?

5. In offering thyself with thy whole heart to the Divine Will; not seeking the things that are thine, either in little or great, either in time or in eternity.

So that with the same equal countenance thou continue giving

thanks both in prosperity and adversity, weighing all things in an equal balance.

If thou come to be so valiant and longsuffering in hope, that, when interior comfort is withdrawn, thou canst prepare thy heart to suffer still more; and dost not justify thyself, as if thou oughtest not to suffer such and so great things, but acknowledgest Me to be just in all My appointments, and praisest My holy name; then thou walkest in the true and right way of peace, and mayest entertain an undoubting hope to see My face again with great joy.

And if thou arrive at an entire contempt of thyself, know that then thou shalt enjoy an abundance of peace, as much as is possible in this thy earthly sojourn.

Chapter XXVI

Of the Excellence of a Free Mind, which Devout Prayer rather Meriteth than Reading

Lord, this is the work of a perfect man, never to let the mind slacken from attending to heavenly things, and amidst many cares to pass on as it were without care: not after the manner of an indolent person, but by a certain prerogative of a free mind, not cleaving with an inordinate affection to anything created.

2. Preserve me, I beseech Thee, O most merciful Lord God, from the cares of this life, that I be not too much entangled by them; from the many necessities of the body, that I be not ensnared by pleasure; and from all obstruction of mind, lest, overcome by molestations, I be quite cast down.

I do not say from those things which worldly vanity covets with so much eagerness; but from those miseries, which, by the common curse of our mortality, penally weigh down and keep back the soul of Thy servant from entering as often as it pleaseth into liberty of spirit.

3. O my God, unspeakable sweetness, turn for me into bitterness all carnal consolation, which withdraweth me from the love of things eternal, and wickedly allureth me to itself, by setting before me some delightful present good.

Let not flesh and blood, O my God, prevail over me; let it not overcome me; let not the world and its transitory glory deceive me; let not the devil supplant me by his craftiness.

Give me courage to resist, patience to endure, and constancy to persevere.

Give me, instead of all worldly consolation, the most sweet unction of Thy Spirit; and instead of carnal love, infuse into me the love of Thy Name.

4. Behold! eating, drinking, clothing, and other necessaries appertaining to the support of the body, are burdensome to the fervent spirit.

Grant that I may use such necessary supports with moderation, and not be entangled with any inordinate affection.

It is not lawful to cast them all away, for nature must be sustained; but to require superfluities, and such things as are rather for delight, Thy holy law forbiddeth; for otherwise the flesh would grow insolent against the spirit.

In all this, I beseech Thee, let Thy hand govern and teach me, that I may in no way exceed.

Chapter XXVII

That Self-love chiefly Keepeth us back from the Sovereign Good

My son, thou must give all for all, and be nothing of thy own.

Know that the love of thyself is more hurtful to thee than anything of the world.

Everything, according to the love and inclination which thou hast to it, cleaveth to thee more or less.

If thy love be pure, simple, and well ordered, thou shalt not be in captivity to anything.

Covet not that which thou mayest not have.

Seek not to have that which may embarrass thee and deprive thee of thy inward liberty.

It is wonderful that thou wilt not, from the very bottom of thy heart, commit thyself wholly to Me, with all things that thou canst desire or have.

2. Why dost thou pine away with vain grief? why art thou so worn with superfluous cares?

Be resigned to My good pleasure, and thou shalt suffer no loss.

If thou seekest this or that, or wouldst be here or there for thy own interests' sake, and the more to indulge thy own will, thou wilt never be at rest, nor free from solicitude; for in everything there will be found some defect, and in every place there will be some one that will cross thee.

3. Thy welfare, therefore, lies not in obtaining and multiplying any external things, but rather in condemning them, and utterly rooting them out of thy heart; which I would not have thee to understand only with regard to money and riches, but also with regard to the ambition of honour, and the desire of empty praise; all which things pass away with the world.

The place avails little, if the spirit of fervour be wanting; neither shall that peace stand long which is sought from without, if the state of thy heart want the true foundation—that is, if thou stand not in Me thou mayest change, but shalt not better thyself.

For, when occasion offers and is laid hold of, thou shalt find that which thou didst fly from, and more.

A Prayer

For the Cleansing of the Heart and for Heavenly Wisdom

4. Confirm me, O God, by the grace of Thy Holy Spirit. Grant me power to be strengthened in the inner man, and to cast out of my heart all unprofitable care and trouble; not to be drawn away with various desires of anything whatsoever, be it vile or precious, but to view all things as passing away, and myself also as passing with them.

For nothing is lasting under the sun, where all is vanity and affliction of spirit. Oh, how wise is he who thus judgeth!

5. Grant me, O Lord, celestial wisdom, that I may learn above all things to seek Thee and to find Thee; above all things to relish Thee and to love Thee, and to understand all other things as they are, according to the order of Thy wisdom.

Grant that I may prudently avoid him that flattereth me, and patiently bear with him that contradicteth me.

For this is great wisdom, not to be moved with every wind of words, nor to give ear to the wicked, flattering siren; for thus shall we go on securely in the way we have begun.

Chapter XXVIII

Against the Tongues of Detractors

Son, take it not to heart if some people think ill of thee, and say of thee what thou art not willing to hear.

Thou oughtest to think worse things of thyself, and to believe no one weaker than thyself.

If thou walkest interiorly, thou wilt make small account of flying words from without.

It is no small prudence to be silent in the evil time, and to turn within to Me, and not to be disturbed with the judgment of man.

2. Let not thy peace depend on the tongues of men; for whether they put a good or bad construction on what thou doest, thou art still what thou art.

Where is true peace or true glory? is it not in Me?

And he who neither desireth to please nor feareth to displease men shall enjoy much peace.

From inordinate love and vain fear ariseth all disquiet of heart and distraction of the senses.

Chapter XXIX

How, when Tribulation Presseth, We must Call upon and Bless God

Blessed, O Lord, be Thy name forever, who hast been pleased that this trial and tribulation should come upon me. I cannot escape it, but must of necessity fly to Thee; that Thou mayest help me, and turn it to my good.

Lord, I am now in tribulation, and my heart is not at ease; but I am much afflicted with my present suffering.

And now, beloved Father, what shall I say? I am taken, Lord, in these straits; O save me from this hour.

But for this reason I came unto this hour, that Thou mightest be glorified, when I shall have been exceedingly humbled and delivered by Thee.

May it please Thee, O Lord, to deliver me; for, poor wretch that I am! what can I do and whither shall I go without Thee?

Give me patience, O Lord, even at this time.

Help me, O my God, and I will not fear, how much soever I may be distressed.

2. And now, in the midst of these things, what shall I say? Lord, Thy will be done: I have well deserved to be afflicted and distressed.

It behoves me to bear it; and would that it were with patience, till the storm pass over, and it grow better.

But Thy almighty hand is able to take away from me this temptation also, and to moderate its violence, that I sink not altogether under it, as Thou hast often done heretofore for me, O my God, my mercy!

And how much the more difficult this is to me, so much the easier to Thee in this change of the right hand of the Most High.

Chapter XXX

Of Asking the Divine Assistance, and of Confidence of Recovering Grace

SON, I am the Lord, who giveth strength in the day of tribulation.

Come to Me when it is not well with thee.

This is that which most of all hindereth heavenly comfort, that thou art too slow in betaking thyself to prayer.

For before thou earnestly prayest to Me thou seekest in the meantime many comforts, and delightest thyself in outward things.

And hence it comes that all things avail thee little, till thou consider well that I am He who delivereth those that trust in Me; nor is there out of Me any powerful help, nor profitable counsel, nor lasting remedy.

But now having recovered thy spirit after the storm, grow thou strong again, in the light of My mercies; for I am at hand, saith the Lord, to repair all, not only to the full, but even with abundance and above measure.

2. Is anything difficult to Me? Or shall I be like to one promising and not performing?

Where is thy faith? Stand firmly and perseveringly; practise endurance and manly courage; comfort will come to thee in due season.

Wait for Me, wait; I will come and cure thee.

It is a temptation that troubleth thee, and a vain fear that affrighteth thee.

What doth the solicitude about future contingencies bring thee, but only sorrow upon sorrow? Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

It is vain and useless to conceive either grief or joy for future things, which perhaps shall never come to pass.

3. But it is in human nature to be deluded with such imaginations; and it is the sign of a soul as yet weak to be so easily drawn away by the suggestions of the enemy.

For he careth not whether it be with things true or false that he

abuseth and deceiveth thee; whether he overthrow thee with the love of things present or the fear of things to come.

Let not, therefore, thy heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Believe thou in Me, and trust in My mercy.

When thou thinkest I am far from thee, I am often nearest to thee.

When thou judgest that almost all is lost, then oftentimes it is that thou art in the way of the greatest gain of merit.

All is not lost when anything falls out contrary to what thou wouldst have it.

Thou must not judge according to thy present feeling, nor give thyself up in such manner to any trouble, whencesoever it comes, nor take it so as if all hope of deliverance were gone.

4. Think not thyself wholly forsaken, though for a time I have sent thee some tribulation, or withdrawn from thee thy wished-for consolation; for this is the way to the kingdom of heaven.

And without doubt it is more expedient for thee and for the rest of My servants, that you be exercised in adversity, than that you should have all things according to your inclination.

I know thy most hidden thoughts, and that it is very expedient for thy salvation that thou sometimes be left without any savour of sweetness, lest perchance thou be puffed up with good success, and take complacency in thyself, imagining thyself to be what thou art not.

What I have given, I have the power to take away, and restore as it pleases Me.

5. When I have given it, it is still Mine; when I withdraw it again, I take not anything that is thine; for every best gift and perfect gift is Mine.

If I send thee affliction or any adversity, repine not, neither let thine heart be cast down.

I can quickly raise thee up again and turn all thy burden into joy.

Nevertheless, I am just, and greatly to be praised, when I thus deal with thee.

6. If thou thinkest rightly, and considerest things in truth, thou oughtest never to be so much dejected and troubled at adversity.

But thou shouldst rather rejoice and give thanks, yea, account this as a special subject of joy, that afflicting thee with sorrows I do not spare thee.

'As the Father hath loved Me, I also love you,' said I to My beloved disciples; when certainly I did not send them to temporal joys, but to great conflicts; not to honours, but to contempt; not to idleness, but to labours; not to rest, but to bring forth much fruit in patience. Remember thou these words, O my son.

Chapter XXXI

Of the Contempt of Everything Created, in order to Find the Creator

Disciple. Lord, I stand much in need of a grace yet greater, if I must arrive so far that it may not be in the power of any man nor anything created to hinder me.

For as long as anything holds me back, I cannot freely fly to Thee.

He was desirous to fly freely to Thee who said: 'Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?'

What can be more at rest than a simple eye?

And what can be more free than he who desires nothing upon earth?

A man ought, therefore, to soar over and above everything created, and perfectly to forsake himself, and in ecstasy of mind to stand and see that Thou, the Creator of all, hast nothing like to Thee among creatures.

And unless a man be disengaged from all things created, he cannot freely attend to things divine.

And this is the reason why there are found so few contemplative persons, because there are few that know how to sequester themselves entirely from perishable creatures.

2. For this a great grace is required, such as may elevate the soul, and lift her up above herself.

And unless a man be elevated in spirit, and freed from attachment to all creatures, and wholly united to God, whatever he knows, and whatever he has, is of no great importance.

For a long time shall he be little, and lie grovelling beneath, who esteems anything great but only the one, immense, eternal good.

And whatsoever is not God, is nothing, and ought to be accounted as nothing.

There is a great difference between the wisdom of an illuminated and devout man, and the knowledge of a learned and studious cleric.

Far more noble is that learning which flows from above, from

the divine influence, than that which is laboriously acquired by the industry of man.

3. Many are found to desire contemplation, but they are not careful to practise those things which are required for its attainment.

It is also a great impediment, that we rest so much upon signs and sensible things, and have but little of perfect mortification.

I know not what it is, by what spirit we are led, or what we pretend to, who seem to be called spiritual persons, that we take so much pains and are so full of anxiety for transitory and mean things, and seldom or never think with full recollection of mind on our own inward concernments.

4. Alas, after a slight recollection, we presently break forth again; neither do we weigh well our works by a strict examination.

Where our affections lie, we take no notice; and how impure is our every action, we do not deplore.

Because all flesh had corrupted its way, therefore the great deluge followed.

Since, therefore, our interior affection is much corrupted, it must needs be that the action which follows, which is a testimony of the want of inward vigour, should also be corrupted.

From a pure heart proceedeth the fruit of a good life.

5. How much a man hath done is inquired into; but with how much virtue he hath acted, is not so studiously weighed.

We ask whether he be strong, rich, handsome, clever, a good writer, a good singer, or a good workman; but how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, how devout and internal, is what few speak of.

Nature looketh upon the exterior of a man; but grace turneth itself to the interior.

Nature is often in error; but grace hath her truth in God, that so she may not be deceived.

Chapter XXXII

Of Self-abnegation and the Renunciation of all Cupidity

Son, thou canst not possess perfect liberty, unless thou wholly deny thyself.

All self-seekers and self-lovers are bound in fetters; full of desires, full of cares, ever unsettled, and seeking always their own ease, not the things of Jesus Christ, but oftentimes devising and framing that which shall not stand.

For all shall perish that cometh not of God.

Hold fast this short and perfect word: 'Forsake all, and thou shalt find all; relinquish desire, and thou shalt find rest.'

Consider this well, and when thou hast put it in practice thou shalt understand all things.

2. Lord, this is not the work of one day, nor children's sport; yea, in this short sentence is included all the perfection of religion.

Son, thou oughtest not to be turned back, nor presently cast down, when thou hearest what it is, the way of the perfect; but be drawn the more onwards towards its lofty heights, or at least aspire ardently for their attainment.

I would it were so with thee, and that thou wert come so far that thou wert no longer a lover of thyself, but didst simply wait my bidding and his whom I have appointed father over thee; then wouldst thou exceedingly please Me, and all thy life would pass in joy and peace.

Thou hast yet many things to forsake, which unless thou give them up to Me without reserve, thou shalt not obtain that for which thou prayest.

I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest become rich—that is, heavenly wisdom, which treadeth under foot all things below.

Lay aside earthly wisdom—that is, all human and self-complacency.

3. I have said, buy for thyself things most contemptible for such as are precious and most valued in human estimation.

For very mean and contemptible, and almost forgotten

amongst men, seems that wisdom which is true and heavenly, not teaching high notions of self, nor seeking to be magnified upon earth; which many praise in words, while in their life they are far from it: yet this same is that precious pearl which is hidden from many.

Chapter XXXIII

Of the Inconstancy of our Heart, and of Directing our Final Intention to God

Son, trust not to thy feeling; whatever it may be now, it will be quickly changed into another.

As long as thou livest thou art subject to change, even against thy will; so as to be sometimes joyful, at other times sad; now at peace, again troubled; at one time devout, at another indevout; sometimes fervent, at other times sluggish; one day heavy, another elated.

But he that is wise and well instructed in spirit, stands above all these changes, not minding what he feels in himself, nor on what side the wind of instability bloweth; but that the whole bent of his soul may be made conducive towards the due and wished-for end.

For thus one and the same and unshaken can he stand, directing, through all this variety of events, the single eye of his intention unflinchingly towards Me.

2. And the purer the eye of thy intention is, with so much greater constancy wilt thou pass through these diverse storms.

But in many the eye of pure intention is dark; for men quickly look towards something delightful, as it comes in their way; and seldom will you find any one altogether free from all blemish of self-seeking.

So of old the Jews came into Bethania to Martha and Mary, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also.

The eye of the intention must therefore be purified, that it may be single and right; and it must be directed unto Me, beyond all various objects that come between.

Chapter XXXIV

That He that Loveth God Relisheth him above all Things and in all Things

Behold, my God and my all! What would I more, and what greater happiness can I desire?

O sweet and savoury word! but to him that loveth the Word, not the world nor the things that are in the world.

My God and my all! To one that understandeth, sufficient is said; to one that loveth, to repeat it often is delightful.

For when Thou art present, all things yield delight; but when thou art absent, all things grow loathsome.

Thou makest a tranquil heart, great peace, and festive joy.

Thou makest us to think well of all things, and in all things to praise Thee, nor can anything without Thee afford any lasting pleasure; but if it is to be agreeable and wellpleasing to us, Thy grace must be present, and it must be seasoned with the savour of Thy wisdom.

2. To whom Thou impartest a relish, what will not be rightly agreeable to him?

And to him that relisheth Thee not, what can ever yield any true delight?

But the wise of the world and the wise according to the flesh are destitute of Thy wisdom; for in the former is found much vanity and in the latter death.

But they that follow Thee, by the contempt of worldly things and the mortification of the flesh, are found to be wise indeed; for they are translated from vanity to truth, from the flesh to the spirit.

Such as these have a relish of God; and whatever good is found in creatures, they refer it all to the praise of their Maker.

But great, yea, very great, is the difference between the relish of the Creator and the creature, of eternity and of time, of light uncreated and of light enlightened.

3. O Light perpetual! transcending all created lights, dart forth that light from above, which may penetrate all the secret recesses of my heart.

Cleanse, cheer, enlighten, and enliven my spirit with its powers, that with joyful ecstasy it may cleave to Thee.

Oh, when will this blessed and desirable hour come, that thou mayest fill me with Thy presence, and become to me all in all?

So long as this is not granted, my joy will not be full.

As yet, alas, the old man is living in me; he is not wholly crucified, he is not perfectly dead.

He still lusteth strongly against the spirit, he wageth war with me, neither suffereth he the kingdom of the soul to be quiet.

4. But Thou, who rulest over the power of the sea, and assuagest the motion of its waves, arise and help me.

Scatter Thou the nations that delight in wars, crush them in Thy might.

Show forth, I beseech Thee, Thy wonderful works, and let Thy right hand be glorified.

For there is no hope nor refuge for me but in Thee, O Lord my God.

Chapter XXXV

That there is no Being Secure from Temptation in this Life

SON, thou art never secure in this life; but as long as thou livest spiritual weapons are always necessary for thee.

Thou art in the midst of enemies, and art assaulted on the right hand and on the left.

If, therefore, thou dost not make use of the buckler of patience on every occasion, thou wilt not be long without a wound.

Moreover, if thou dost not set thy heart fixedly on Me, with a sincere will of suffering all things for My sake, thou canst neither sustain the heat of this warfare, nor attain to the palm of the Blessed.

It behoveth thee, therefore, to go through all manfully, and to use a strong hand against whatsoever withstandeth thee.

For to him that overcometh is given manna, and to the sluggard is left much misery.

2. If, in this life, thou seekest rest, how then wilt thou come to the eternal rest?

Set not thyself for much rest, but for great patience.

Seek true peace not upon earth, but in heaven; not in men, not in other creatures, but in God alone.

Thou must be willing, for the love of God, to suffer all things —namely, labours and sorrows, temptations, vexations, anxieties, necessities, infirmities, injuries, detractions, reprehensions, humiliations, confusions, corrections, and contempt.

These help to virtue, these prove the novice of Christ, these things weave a celestial crown.

I will give thee back for this short labour a reward eternal, and for transitory confusion glory that is infinite.

3. Dost thou think always to have spiritual consolations when thou pleasest?

My Saints had not so; but they met with many troubles, and various temptations, and great desolations.

But they patiently supported themselves in all contingencies, and confided more in God than in themselves, knowing that the

sufferings of this life are not worthy to merit the glory that is to come.

Wouldst thou have that immediately, which others, after many tears and great labours, have hardly obtained?

Expect the Lord, do manfully, and be of good heart; do not despond, do not fall off, but offer with constancy both soul and body for the glory of God.

I will reward thee most abundantly; I will be with thee in all thy tribulations.

Chapter XXXVI

Against the Vain Judgments of Man

SON, cast thy heart firmly on the Lord, and fear not human judgment, whensoever thy conscience gives testimony of thy piety and innocence.

It is a good and blessed thing to suffer in such a manner; neither will this be grievous to an humble heart, nor to one that confideth in God more than in oneself.

Many say many things, and therefore little credit must be given to them.

Neither is it possible to satisfy all.

Though Paul endeavoured to please all in the Lord, and became all to all, yet he made little account of being judged by man.

2. He laboured abundantly for the edification and salvation of others, as much as lay in him and as much as he could; but he could not prevent being sometimes judged and despised by others.

Therefore he committed all to God, who knoweth all, and defended himself by patience and humility against the tongues of those that spoke unjustly, as well as those who devised vain and lying deceits, and who, according to caprice, made accusation of whatever they wished.

However, he answered them sometimes, lest his silence might give occasion of scandal to the weak.

3. Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a mortal man? To-day he is, and to-morrow he is no more seen.

Fear God, and thou shalt not be afraid of the terrors of man.

What can any one do against thee by words or injuries?

He rather hurts himself than thee; nor will he be able, whoever he be, to escape the judgment of God.

Have God before thine eyes, and do not contend with querulous words.

So that, if at present thou seem to be overcome, and to suffer a confusion which thou hast not deserved, do not repine at this, and do not lessen thy crown by impatience, but rather look up to Me in heaven, who am powerful to deliver thee from all confusion and injury, and to render to every one according to his works.

Chapter XXXVII

Of a Pure and Entire Resignation of Ourselves for the Obtaining Freedom of Heart

Son, relinquish thyself, and thou shalt find Me.

Stand without choice or any self-seeking, and thou shalt always gain.

For greater grace shall be added to thee as soon as thou hast given up thyself, and dost not take thyself back.

2. Lord, how often shall I resign myself, and in what things shall I relinquish myself?

3. Always and at all times; as in little, so also in great. I make no exception, but will have thee to be found in all things divested of self.

Otherwise, how canst thou be Mine and I thine, unless thou be both interiorly and exteriorly stripped of thy own will?

The sooner thou effectest this, the better will it be with thee; and the more fully and sincerely thou dost it, the more wilt thou please Me, and the more shalt thou gain.

4. Some there are that resign themselves, but it is with some exception; for they do not wholly trust in God, and therefore are busy in providing for themselves.

Some also at first offer all; but afterwards, being assailed by temptation, they return again to what they had left, and therefore make no progress in virtue.

These shall neither attain to the true liberty of a pure heart, nor to the grace of a delightful familiarity with Me, unless they first entirely resign themselves up and offer themselves a daily sacrifice to Me, without which, union of fruition neither is nor shall subsist.

5. I have often said to thee, and I repeat it now again: Forsake thyself, resign thyself, and thou shalt enjoy a great inward peace.

Give all for all; seek nothing; call for nothing back; stand purely and with a full confidence before Me, and thou shalt possess Me.

Thou shalt be free in heart, and the darkness shall not weigh thee down.

Aim at this, pray for this, desire this, that thou mayest be

divested of all self-seeking; and, thus naked, follow Jesus naked, that thou mayest die to thyself, and eternally live to Me.

Then all vain imaginations shall vanish—all evil disturbances and superfluous cares.

Then also immoderate fear shall forsake thee, and inordinate love shall die.

Chapter XXXVIII

Of the Good Government of Ourselves in Outward Things, and of having Recourse to God in Dangers

Son, thou oughtest diligently to aim at this, that in every place, and in every action or external occupation, thou be inwardly free and master of thyself, and that all things be under thee, and not thou under them.

That thou mayest be lord and ruler of thy actions, and not a slave or mercenary.

But rather a freeman and true Hebrew, transferred to the lot and to the liberty of the sons of God.

Who stand above things present, and contemplate the eternal; who with the left eye regard things passing, and with the right those of heaven.

Whom things temporal draw not away to adhere to them; but they rather draw these things, to subserve well the end for which they were ordained by God, and appointed by that sovereign Artist, who has left nothing disordered in His whole creation.

2. If, likewise, in all events, thou depend not upon things as they appear outwardly, nor regard with a carnal eye things seen and heard, but if instantly, on every occasion, thou enter, like Moses, into the tabernacle to consult the Lord, thou shalt sometimes hear the divine answer, and shalt return instructed about many things present and future.

For Moses always had recourse to the tabernacle for the deciding doubts and questions, and fled to the aid of prayer for succour against the dangers and wickedness of men.

So must thou, in like manner, fly to the closet of thy heart, and there most earnestly implore the Divine assistance.

For therefore, as thou readest, were Josue and the children of Israel deceived by the Gaboanites, because they did not first consult the Lord, but, too easily giving credit to pleasant words, were deluded with counterfeit piety.

Chapter XXXIX

That a Man must not be too Anxious about his Affairs

SON, commit thy cause to Me always; I will dispose of it well, in its due season.

Await My appointment, and thence thou shalt experience success therefrom.

2. Lord, most willingly do I commit all things to Thee; for but little can my own device avail.

Would that I might not be too much set upon future events, but unhesitatingly offer myself to Thy good pleasure.

3. My Son, oftentimes a man vehemently pursues something which he desires; but when he has obtained it he begins to be of another mind.

For our affections are not enduring with regard to the same object, but we rather drive onwards from one to another.

It is therefore no small matter, even in things the most trifling, to relinquish self.

4. Man's true progress consists in denying himself, and the man of self-denial is very much at liberty, and secure likewise.

But the old enemy, opposed to all that is good, ceaseth not from tempting, but day and night plotteth deep snares, if perchance he may precipitate the unwary into the deceitful snare.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation, saith the Lord.

Chapter XL

That Man hath no Good of Himself, and that He cannot Glory in Anything

Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?

What hath man deserved, that Thou shouldst give him Thy grace?

Lord, what cause have I to complain, if Thou forsake me? or what can I justly allege, if what I petition Thou shalt not grant?

This most assuredly I may truly think and say: 'Lord, I am nothing, I can do nothing, I have nothing of myself that is good; but I am in all things defective, and ever tend to nothing.'

And unless I am assisted and interiorly instructed by Thee, I become wholly tepid and relaxed.

2. But Thou, O Lord, art always the same, and endurest unto eternity; ever good, just, and holy; doing all things well, justly, and holily, and disposing them in wisdom.

But I, who am more inclined to go back than to go forward, continue not always in one state; for seven different times are changed over me.

Yet it quickly becometh better when it pleaseth Thee, and Thou stretchest out Thy helping hand; for Thou alone, without man's aid, canst assist and so strengthen me that my countenance shall be no more diversely changed, but my heart be converted, and find its rest in Thee alone.

3. Wherefore, did I but know well how to cast from me all human comfort, either for the sake of devotion, or through the necessity by which I am compelled to seek Thee, because there is no man that can comfort me, then might I deservedly hope in Thy favour, and rejoice in the gift of new consolation.

4. Thanks be to Thee, from whom all proceedeth, as often as it happeneth well to me.

I, indeed, am but vanity, and nothing in Thy sight, an inconstant and weak man.

Whence, therefore, can I glory, or for what do I desire to be thought highly of?

Forsooth, of my very nothingness; and this is most vain.

Truly vainglory is an evil plague, the greatest vanity, because it draweth away from true glory and robbeth us of heavenly grace.

For whilst a man taketh complacency in himself, he displeaseth Thee; whilst he panteth after human applause, he is deprived of true virtues.

5. But true glory and holy exultation is to glory in Thee, and not in oneself; to rejoice in Thy Name, not in one's own strength; to find pleasure in no creature, save only for Thy sake.

Let Thy Name be praised, not mine; let Thy work be magnified, not mine; let Thy holy Name be blessed, but let nothing be attributed to me of the praises of men.

Thou art my glory, Thou art the exultation of my heart.

In Thee will I glory and rejoice all the day; but for myself, I will glory in nothing but in my infirmities.

6. Let the Jews seek glory of another; I will seek that which is from God alone.

All human glory, all temporal honour, all worldly grandeur, compared to Thy eternal glory, is but vanity and folly.

O my truth and my mercy! my God! O blessed Trinity! to Thee alone be all praise, honour, power, and glory, for endless ages of ages.

Chapter XLI

Of the Contempt of all Temporal Honours

My son, take it not to heart, if thou seest others honoured and advanced, and thyself despised and debased.

Lift up thy heart to Me in heaven, and the contempt of men on earth shall not grieve thee.

2. Lord, we are in blindness, and by vanity are quickly seduced.

If I look well into myself, never was any injury done me by any creature, and therefore I can have no just complaint against Thee.

But since I have often and grievously sinned against Thee, every creature is deservedly armed against me.

To me, therefore, is justly due confusion and contempt; but to Thee, praise, honour, and glory.

And unless I put myself in this disposition, to be willing to be despised and forsaken by all creatures, and to be esteemed altogether nothing, I can neither be interiorly at peace and stand firm, nor be spiritually enlightened, nor fully united to Thee.

Chapter XLII

That Peace is not to be Placed in Men

Son, if thou placest thy peace in any person, for thy own gratification, and for the sake of his society, thou shalt be unsettled and entangled.

But if thou hast recourse to the ever-living and abiding Truth, thou wilt not be greatly grieved if a friend forsake thee or die.

In Me the love of thy friend ought to stand; and for Me is he to be loved, whoever he be, that appeareth to thee good and much to be loved in this life.

Without Me, friendship can neither profit nor endure; nor is that love true and pure, which I do not bind together.

Thou oughtest to be so dead towards persons beloved, as to wish, as far as thou art concerned, to be altogether without any human fellowship.

So much the nearer doth man approach to God, as he withdraweth himself the farther from all earthly consolation.

So much the higher also doth he ascend to God, as he descendeth the lower into himself, and becometh the viler in his own estimation.

2. But he that attributeth anything of good to himself, hinders God's grace from coming into him; for the grace of the Holy Spirit ever seeketh a humble heart.

If thou knowest perfectly how to annihilate thyself, and empty thyself of all created love, then would I flow into thee with great grace.

When thou lookest towards creatures, the sight of the Creator is withdrawn from thee.

Learn, for the sake of the Creator, to overcome thyself in all things; and then shalt thou be able to attain divine knowledge.

How little soever it be, if anything be inordinately loved and regarded, it keepeth thee back from the Sovereign Good and corrupteth the soul.

Chapter XLIII

Against Vain and Worldly Learning

Son, let not the beautiful and subtle sayings of men affect thee; for the kingdom of God consisteth not in speech, but in virtue.

Attend to My words, which inflame hearts and enlighten minds, which excite to compunction and afford manifold consolations.

Never read anything in order that thou mayest appear more learned or more wise.

Study the mortification of thy vices; for this will more avail thee than the knowledge of many difficult questions.

2. When thou shalt have read and shalt know many things, thou must always revert to the one beginning.

I am He who teacheth men knowledge, and who giveth a more clear understanding to little ones than can be taught by man.

He to whom I speak will quickly be wise and will profit greatly in spirit.

Woe to them that inquire after many curious things of men, and are little curious of the way to serve Me.

The time will come when Christ, the Master of masters, the Lord of angels, shall appear to hear the lessons of all men—that is, to examine the conscience of every one.

And then will He search Jerusalem with lamps, and the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the argument of tongues shall be silent.

3. I am He that, in an instant, elevateth the humble mind to comprehend more reasons of the eternal truth than if any one had studied ten years in the schools.

I teach without noise of words, without confusion of opinions, without ambition of honour, without strife of arguments.

I am He who teacheth to despise earthly things, to loathe things present, to seek the things eternal, to relish the things eternal, to fly honours, to endure scandals, to repose all hope in Me, to desire nothing out of Me, and above all things ardently to love Me.

4. For a certain person, by loving Me intimately, learned things divine and spoke wonders.

He profited more by forsaking all things than by studying subtleties.

But to some I speak things common, to others things more particular; to some I sweetly appear in signs and figures, to others in great light I reveal mysteries.

One is the voice of books, but it teacheth not all men alike, because I within am the Teacher of truth, the Searcher of the heart, the Understander of thoughts, the Mover of actions, distributing to every one as I judge fitting.

Chapter XLIV

Of not Drawing to Ourselves Exterior Things

Son, in many things it behoveth thee to be ignorant, and to esteem thyself as dead upon earth, and as one to whom the whole world is crucified.

Many things also thou must pass by with a deaf ear, and think rather of the things that are for thy peace.

It is more profitable to turn away thy eyes from such things as displease thee, and leave to every one his own way of thinking, than to give loose to contentious discourses.

If thou standest well with God, and regardest His judgment, thou wilt more easily bear to be overcome.

2. O Lord, to what are we come? behold, a temporal loss is bewailed; for a small gain, men labour and run; but spiritual detriment is soon forgotten, and hardly ever returns to mind.

That which is of little or no profit taketh up our thoughts, and that which is necessary above all is negligently passed over; for the whole man sinketh down into outward things, and unless he quickly recovereth himself he willingly continueth immersed in exterior things.

Chapter XLV

That We may not Believe all, and how Easily We Err in Speech

GRANT me help, O Lord, in my tribulation, for vain is the aid of man.

How often have I not found faithfulness there where I thought I might depend upon it.

And how often have I there found it where I the less expected it!

Vain therefore is hope in man; but the salvation of the just is in Thee, O God.

Blessed be thou, O Lord my God, in all things that befall us.

We are weak and unsteadfast; we are easily deceived and changed.

2. Who is the man that is able to keep himself so warily and so circumspectly in all things, as not sometimes to fall into delusion or perplexity?

But he that trusteth in Thee, O Lord, and seeketh Thee with a simple heart, doth not so easily fall.

And should he perchance fall into some tribulation, how entangled soever he be therewith, he will the sooner be rescued or comforted by Thee; for Thou wilt not finally forsake him that trusteth in Thee.

Rare indeed is a faithful friend, who will persevere in all the pressing necessities of his friend.

Thou, O Lord, Thou alone art most faithful in all things, and besides Thee there is no other such.

3. Oh, how wise was that holy soul that said: My mind is solidly established in and grounded upon Christ!*

Were it but so with me, human fear would not so easily give me anxiety, nor the arrows of men's words move me.

Who is sufficient to foresee all things? who to provide against future evils?

If things foreseen do yet often hurt us, how can things unlooked for otherwise than grievously wound us? But have I not better provided for my wretched self?

* Life of St Agatha.

Why also have I so easily placed confidence in others?

But we are men: and no other indeed than frail men, although by many we are esteemed and called angels.

To whom shall I give credit, O Lord?

Whom shall I believe but Thee? Thou art the Truth, which canst neither deceive nor be deceived.

And again: Every man is a liar, weak, unstable, and subject to fail, especially in words; so that we ought not readily to believe even that, which in appearance seemeth to sound well.

4. How wisely didst thou forewarn us to take heed of men, and that a man's enemies are those of his own household; that we are not to believe if any one should say: Behold here, or behold there.

I have been taught to my cost, and I wish it may serve to make me more cautious, and not increase my folly.

Be wary, saith a certain one; be wary, keep to thyself what I tell thee.

And whilst I keep silence, and believe the matter to be secret, he himself cannot keep the secret which he desireth me to keep, but presently betrayeth both me and himself, and goeth his way.

From such foolish speech and such unwary people defend me, O Lord, that I may not fall into their hands, nor ever commit the like.

Give to my mouth truth and constancy in my words, and remove far from me a crafty tongue.

What I am not willing to suffer, I ought by all means to shun.

5. Oh, how good and how peaceful is it to be silent about others, and not to believe all that is said, nor easily to report what one has heard. To lay oneself open to few; always to seek Thee, the Beholder of the heart.

And not to be carried about with every wind of words; but to wish that all things, both within and without us, may be accomplished according to the pleasure of Thy will!

How secure is it for the preservation of heavenly grace, to fly the human appearance, not to seek those things that seem to cause admiration abroad, but with all diligence to follow those things which bring amendment of life and fervour!

To how many hath it been hurtful to have their virtue known and over-hastily praised!

How indeed hath grace profited, when kept with silence during this frail life, the whole of which is declared to be a temptation and a warfare!

Chapter XLVI

Of having Confidence in God, when Arrows of Words are Aimed against us

Son, stand firm, and trust in Me; for what are words, but words?

They fly through the air, but hurt not a stone.

If thou art guilty, think that thou wilt willingly amend thyself; if thou art not conscious to thyself of anything, think that thou wilt willingly suffer this for God's sake.

It is a small matter that thou shouldst sometimes bear with words, who art not able as yet to endure hard blows.

And why do such trifles go to thy heart, but because thou art yet carnal, and regardest men more than thou oughtest?

For because thou art afraid of being despised, thou art not willing to be reprehended for thy faults, and seekest shelter in excuses.

2. But look better into thyself, and thou shalt find that the world is still within thee, and a vain fondness for pleasing men.

For since thou refusest to be abased and confounded for thy defects, it is plain indeed that thou art neither truly humble, nor dead to the world, nor the world crucified to thee.

But give ear to My word, and thou shalt not value ten thousand words of men.

Behold, if all were said against thee which with the utmost malice could possibly be invented, what hurt could they do thee, if thou wouldst let them all pass, and value them no more than a straw?

Could they even so much as pluck one hair from thee?

3. But he who keepeth not his heart interiorly, nor God before his eyes, is easily moved with a word of dispraise.

Whereas he that trusteth in Me, and desireth not to stand by his own judgment, will be void of human fear.

For I am the Judge and Discerner of all secrets; I know how the matter passeth; I know both him that inflicteth the injury and him that suffereth it.

From Me went forth this word, by My permission it happened, that the thoughts out of many hearts might be revealed.

I will judge the guilty and the innocent; but by a secret judgment I would try them both beforehand.

4. The testimony of men oftentimes deceiveth; My judgment is true; it shall stand and not be overthrown.

It is for the most part hidden, and to few laid open in everything; yet it never erreth, nor can it err, though to the eyes of the unwise it may seem not right.

To Me, therefore, must thou run in every decision, and not depend upon thy own judgment.

For the just man will not be troubled, whatever happeneth to him from God.

And should even some unjust charge be preferred against him, he will not much care; yet neither will he vainly rejoice, if he be reasonably acquitted by others.

For he considereth that I am He who searcheth the heart and the reins, who judgeth not according to the face nor according to human appearance.

For oftentimes that is found blameworthy in My eyes, which in the judgment of men is esteemed commendable.

5. O Lord God, the just Judge, strong and patient, who knowest the frailty and depravity of men, be thou my strength and my entire confidence, for my own conscience sufficeth me not.

Thou knowest that which I know not; and therefore, under every reprehension, I ought to humble myself and bear it with meekness.

Pardon me, therefore, propitiously, as often as I have not done thus; and give me in future the grace of greater longsuffering.

For better to me is Thy abundant mercy for the obtaining of pardon, than my own imaginary justice for the defending of my hidden conscience.

And although I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet I cannot hereby justify myself: for Thy mercy apart, no man living shall in Thy sight be justified.

Chapter XLVII

That all Grievous Things are to be Endured for Life Everlasting

SON, let not the labours which thou hast undertaken for My sake crush thee, neither let tribulations, from whatever source, cast thee down; but in every occurrence let My promise strengthen and console thee.

I am sufficient to recompense thee beyond all bounds and measure.

It is not long thou hast to labour here, nor shalt thou be always oppressed with sorrows.

Wait a little, and thou shalt see a speedy end of suffering.

The hour cometh when all labour and trouble shall be no more.

All is little and short, which passeth away with time.

2. Mind what thou art about; labour faithfully in My vineyard; I will be thy reward.

Write, read, sing, lament, keep silence, pray, bear adversities manfully; eternal life is worth all these and greater combats.

Peace shall come on one day, which is known to the Lord.

And it will not be day or night such as it is at present, but light everlasting, infinite brightness, steadfast peace, and safe repose.

Thou shalt not then say: Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Neither shalt thou cry out: Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged; for death shall be no more, but never-failing health; no anxiety, but blessed delight, and a society sweet and glorious.

3. Oh! if thou couldst see the everlasting crowns of the Saints in heaven, and in how great glory they now triumph, who appeared contemptible heretofore to this world, and as it were even unworthy of life, doubtless thou wouldst immediately cast thyself down to the very earth, and wouldst rather be ambitious to be in subjection to all than to have precedence over so much as one.

Neither wouldst thou covet the pleasant days of this life, but wouldst rather be glad to suffer tribulations for God's sake, and esteem it the greatest gain to be reputed as nothing amongst men.

4. Oh, if thou didst but relish these things, did they penetrate deep into thy heart, how wouldst thou dare so much as once to complain!

Ought not all painful labours to be endured for everlasting life?

It is no small matter to lose or gain the kingdom of God.

Lift up, therefore, thy face to heaven; behold, I and all My Saints with Me, who in this world have had a great conflict, now rejoice, are comforted now, are now secure, are now at rest; and they shall for all eternity abide with Me in the kingdom of My Father.

Chapter XLVIII

Of the Day of Eternity, and of the Distresses of this Life

Oh, most happy mansion of the supernal city!

Oh, most bright day of eternity! which no night ever obscureth, but which the Sovereign Truth always enlighteneth.

A day always joyful, always secure, and never changing its state for the contrary.

Oh, that this day would shine forth and that all these temporal things would come to an end!

It shineth, indeed, upon the Saints, resplendent with everlasting brightness; but to us, pilgrims upon earth, it is seen only as afar off and through a glass.

2. The citizens of heaven know how joyful that day is; but we, poor exiled children of Eve, mourn that this our day is bitter and tedious.

The days of this life are short and evil, full of grief and distresses, where man is defiled with many sins, ensnared by many passions, enslaved with many fears, harassed with many snares, distracted with many curiosities, entangled with many vanities, encompassed with many errors, worn with many labours, troubled with temptation, enervated with pleasure, tormented with want.

3. Oh, when will there be an end of these evils?

When shall I be set at liberty from the wretched slavery of vice?

When, O Lord, shall I think of Thee alone?

When shall I fully rejoice in Thee?

When shall I be without any impediment in true liberty, without any grievance of mind and body?

When shall there be solid peace, peace firm and undisturbed, peace within and without, peace on every side secure?

O good Jesus! when shall I stand to behold Thee?

When shall I contemplate the glory of Thy kingdom? When wilt Thou be all in all to me?

Oh, when shall I be with Thee in Thy kingdom, which Thou hast prepared for Thy beloved from all eternity?

I am left poor and an exile in an enemy's country, where there are daily wars and grievous misfortunes.

4. Solace my banishment, assuage my sorrow, for my every desire aspireth unto Thee; for whatever this world offereth for my comfort is all burdensome to me.

I long to enjoy Thee intimately, but cannot attain unto it.

I desire to cleave to heavenly things, but temporal things and my unmortified passions weigh me down.

With my mind I wish to be above all things, but by the flesh I am forced against my will to be subject to them.

Thus, unhappy man that I am, I fight with myself, and am become burdensome to myself, whilst the spirit tendeth upwards, and the flesh downwards.

5. Oh! what do I suffer interiorly, whilst with my mind I consider heavenly things; and presently a crowd of carnal thoughts interrupt me as I pray.

O my God, remove not Thyself far from me, and depart not in anger from Thy servant.

Dart forth Thy lightning, and disperse them; shoot Thy arrows, and let all the phantoms of the enemy be put to flight.

Recollect my senses in Thee; make me forget all worldly things; grant me speedily to cast away and to despise all phantoms and vice.

Come to my aid, O Eternal Truth, that no vanity may move me.

Come, heavenly sweetness, and let all impurity fly from before Thy face.

Pardon me also, and mercifully forgive me, as often as in my prayer I think of aught else beside Thee.

For I truly confess that I am accustomed to be very much distracted.

For many a time I am not there where I am bodily standing or sitting, but am there rather where my thoughts carry me.

There am I where my thought is, and there oftentimes are my thoughts where that which I love is.

That thing most readily cometh to my mind, which naturally delighteth me or which through custom is pleasing to me.

6. Whence Thou, the Eternal Truth, hast plainly said: Where thy treasure is, there also is thy heart.

If I love heaven, I love to think on heavenly things.

If I love the world, I rejoice at the world's prosperity, and am troubled at its adversity.

If I love the flesh, my imagination is often on the things of the flesh.

If I love the spirit, I delight to think of spiritual things.

For whatsoever things I love, of the same I love to speak and hear, and I carry home with me the imaginative impressions of such.

But blessed is that man who for Thee, O Lord, abandoneth all things created; who offereth violence to nature, and through fervour of spirit crucifieth the concupiscence of the flesh, that so, with a serene conscience, he may offer to Thee pure prayer, and become worthy to be admitted among the choir of angels, having excluded himself both exteriorly and interiorly from all the things of earth.

Chapter XLIX

Of the Desire of Eternal Life, and how Great are the Benefits Promised to them that Fight

Son, when thou perceivest the desire of eternal bliss to be infused into thee from above, and thou wouldst fain go out of the tabernacle of this body that thou mightest contemplate My brightness without any shadow of change, enlarge thy heart and receive this holy inspiration with thy whole desire.

Return the greatest thanks to the supreme Goodness, which dealeth so condescendingly with thee, mercifully visiteth thee, ardently inciteth thee, and powerfully raiseth thee up, lest by thy own weight thou fall down to the things of earth.

For it is not by thy own thoughtfulness or endeavour that thou receivest this, but by the mere condescension of heavenly grace and divine regard, that so thou mayest advance in virtues and greater humility, and prepare thyself for future conflicts, and labour with the whole affection of thy heart to keep close to Me, and serve Me with a fervent will.

2. Son, the fire often burneth, but the flame ascendeth not without smoke.

And so the desires of some are on fire after heavenly things, and yet they are not free from the temptation of carnal affection.

Therefore is it not altogether purely for God's honour that they act, when they so earnestly petition Him.

Such, also, is oftentimes thy desire, which thou hast professed to be so importunate.

For that is not pure and perfect which is alloyed with self-interest.

3. Ask not that which is pleasant and convenient, but that which is acceptable to Me and for My honour; for if thou judgest rightly, thou oughtest to prefer and to follow My appointment rather than thine own desire or any other desirable thing.

I know thy desire, and I have often heard thy groanings.

Thou wouldst wish to be already in the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

Now doth the eternal dwelling, and the heavenly country full of festivity, delight thee.

But that hour is not yet come; for there is yet another time, a time of war, a time of labour and of probation.

Thou desireth to be filled with the Sovereign Good, but thou canst not at present attain to it.

I am He: wait for Me, saith the Lord, until the kingdom of God come.

4. Thou hast yet to be tried upon earth and exercised in many things.

Consolation shall sometimes be given thee, but abundant satiety shall not be granted thee.

Take courage, therefore, and be valiant, as well in doing as in suffering things repugnant to nature.

Thou must put on the new man, and be changed into another person.

That which thou wouldst not, thou must oftentimes do; and that which thou wouldst, thou must leave undone.

What pleaseth others shall prosper, what is pleasing to thee shall not succeed.

What others say shall be hearkened to; what thou sayest shall be reckoned as nought.

Others shall ask and shall receive; thou shalt ask and not obtain.

5. Others shall be great in the esteem of men; about thee nothing shall be said.

To others this or that shall be committed; but thou shalt be accounted as of no use.

At this, nature will sometimes repine, and it will be a great matter if thou bear it with silence.

In these, and many such-like things, the faithful servant of the Lord is wont to be tried how far he can deny and break himself in all things.

There is scarce anything, in which thou standest so much in need of dying to thyself, as in seeing and suffering things that are contrary to thy will, and more especially when those things are commanded which seem to thee inconvenient and of little use.

And because, being under authority, thou darest not resist the higher power, therefore it seemeth to thee hard to walk at the beck of another, and wholly to give up thy own opinion.

6. But consider, son, the fruit of these labours, their speedy termination and their reward exceedingly great; and thou wilt not hence derive affliction, but the most strengthening consolation in thy suffering.

For in regard to that little of thy will, which thou now willingly forsakest, thou shalt forever have thy will in heaven.

For there thou shalt find all that thou willest, all that thou canst desire.

There shall be to thee the possession of every good, without fear of losing it.

There thy will, always one with Me, shall not covet any extraneous or private thing.

There no one shall resist thee, no one complain of thee, no one obstruct thee, nothing shall stand in thy way; but every desirable good shall be present at the same moment, shall replenish all thy affections, and satiate them to the full.

There I will give thee glory for the contumely thou hast suffered; a garment of praise for thy sorrow; and for having been seated here in the lowest place, the throne of My kingdom forever.

There will the fruit of obedience appear, there will the labour of penance rejoice, and humble subjection shall be gloriously crowned.

7. Now, therefore, bow thyself down humble under the hands of all, and heed not who it was that said or commanded this.

But let it be thy great care, that whether thy superior, or inferior, or equal, require anything of thee, or hint at anything, thou take all in good part and labour with a sincere will to perform it.

Let one seek this, another that; let this man glory in this thing, another in that, and be praised a thousand times; but thou, for thy part, rejoice neither in this nor in that, but in the contempt of thyself, and in My good pleasure and honour alone.

This is what thou hast to wish for: that, whether in life or in death, God may be always glorified in thee.

Chapter L

How a Desolate Person ought to Offer Himself into the Hands of God

O Lord God, holy Father, be Thou now and forever blessed; for as Thou wilt, so is it done, and what Thou dost is always good.

Let Thy servant rejoice in Thee, not in himself nor in any other: for Thou alone art true joy, Thou art my hope and my crown, Thou art my joy and my honour, O Lord.

What hath Thy servant but what he hath received from Thee, even without any merit on his part?

All things are Thine, both what Thou hast given and what thou hast made.

I am poor, and in labours from my youth, and my soul is saddened sometimes even unto tears, and sometimes too my spirit is disturbed within herself, by reason of impending suffering.

2. I desire the joy of peace; I beg earnestly for the peace of thy children, who are fed by Thee in the light of consolation.

If Thou give peace, if Thou infuse holy joy, the soul of Thy servant shall be full of melody and devout in Thy praise.

But if Thou withdraw Thyself, as Thou art very often accustomed to do, he will not be able to run in the way of Thy commandments, but must rather bow down his knees and strike his breast, because it is not with him as yesterday and the day before, when Thy lamp shone over his head, and he was protected, under the shadow of Thy wings, from assaulting temptations.

3. O just Father, holy, and ever to be praised, the hour is come for Thy servant to be tried.

O Father worthy of all love, it is fitting that Thy servant should at this hour suffer something for Thee.

O Father always to be honoured, the hour is come which, from all eternity, Thou didst foresee would arrive, that Thy servant for a short time should be oppressed exteriorly, but interiorly should ever live unto Thee; that he should be for a little slighted and humbled, and should fail in the sight of men.

That he should be severely afflicted with sufferings and languor, that so he may rise again with Thee in the dawning of a new light, and be glorified in heaven.

O holy Father, Thou hast so appointed, and such is Thy will; and that has come to pass which Thou hast ordained.

4. For this is a favour to Thy friend, that he should suffer and be afflicted in this world for the love of Thee, how often soever, by whomsoever, and in what manner soever Thou permittest it to befall him.

Without Thy design and providence, and without cause, nothing happeneth in the world.

It is good for me, O Lord, that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy justification, and that I may cast away all pride of heart and presumption.

It is profitable for me that shame hath covered my face, that I may rather seek my comfort from Thee than from men.

I have also hereby learned to fear Thy inscrutable judgment, who afflictest the just with the impious, but not without equity and justice.

5. I return Thee thanks that Thou hast not spared my evil ways, but hast bruised me with bitter stripes, inflicting anguish, and sending distress both within and without.

Of all things under heaven, there is none that can comfort me but Thou, O Lord, my God, the heavenly Physician of souls, who woundest and healest, bringest down to hell and leadest back again.

Thy discipline is upon me, and Thy rod itself shall instruct me.

6. Behold, O beloved Father, I am in Thy hands; I bow myself down under the rod of Thy correction.

Strike Thou my back and my neck, that I may bend my perversity to Thy will.

Make me a pious and humble disciple, as Thou in Thy goodness art wont to do, that I may walk according to every indication of Thy will.

Myself and all that are mine I commit to Thee for Thy correction; it is better to be chastised here than hereafter.

Thou knowest all and everything, and nothing in man's conscience lieth hidden from Thee.

Coming events Thou knowest before they happen; and Thou hast no need to be taught or admonished by any one of what is being done on earth.

Thou knowest what is expedient for my progress and how much tribulation serveth to cleanse away the rust of sin.

Do with me according to Thy desired good pleasure; and despise not my sinful life, to no one better or more clearly known than Thyself alone.

7. Grant me, O Lord, to know what I ought to know; to love what I ought to love; to praise that which is most pleasing to Thee; to esteem that which appeareth to Thee valuable; to abhor that which is filthy in Thy sight.

Suffer me not to judge according to the sight of the outward eyes, nor to give sentence according to the hearing of the ears of ignorant men; but to determine upon matters, both visible and spiritual, with true judgment and, above all things, ever to seek Thy good will and pleasure.

8. The senses of men are often deceived in giving judgments; and the lovers of this world are deceived in loving only visible things.

How is a man a whit the better for being reputed greater by man?

The deceitful deceiveth the deceitful, the vain deceiveth the vain, the blind the blind, the weak the weak, as often as he extolleth him; and, in truth, doth rather confound him, whilst he vainly praiseth him.

For how much soever each one is in Thy eyes, so much is he and no more, saith the humble Saint Francis.

Chapter LI

That We must Exercise Ourselves in Humble Works when We cannot Attain to the Highest

SON, thou canst not always continue in the more fervent desire of virtue, nor remain constantly in the higher degree of contemplation; but it must needs be that thou sometimes, by reason of original corruption, descend to low things, and bear the burden of this corruptible life, even against thy will and with weariness.

As long as thou carriest about with thee thy mortal body, thou shalt feel weariness and heaviness of heart.

Thou oughtest, therefore, while in the flesh, oftentimes to bewail the burden of the flesh, for that thou canst not unceasingly give thyself up to spiritual exercises and divine contemplation.

2. On such occasions, it is expedient for thee to betake thyself to humble and exterior works and recreate thyself in good actions, to await my coming and heavenly visitation with an assured hope, to bear with patience thy banishment and the aridity of thy mind, until thou be again visited by Me and freed from all anxieties.

For I will cause thee to forget thy pains, and to enjoy internal quiet.

I will spread open before thee the pleasant fields of the Scriptures, that, thy heart being enlarged, thou mayest begin to run in the way of My commandments.

And then shalt thou say: The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the future glory which shall be revealed in us.

Chapter LII

That a Man ought not to Esteem Himself Worthy of Consolation, but rather deserving of Chastisements

Lord, I am not worthy of Thy consolation, nor of any spiritual visitation; and therefore justly dost Thou deal with me when Thou leavest me poor and desolate.

For could I shed tears like a sea, yet should I not be worthy of Thy consolation.

Wherefore I deserve nothing else but to be scourged and punished, because I have grievously and often offended Thee, and in many things have very much sinned against Thee.

So that, according to just reason, I do not deserve the least consolation.

But Thou, O gracious and merciful God, who wilt not that Thy works perish, to show the riches of Thy goodness towards the vessels of mercy, vouchsafest beyond all desert to comfort Thy servant above human measure.

For Thy consolations are not like the discourses of men.

2. What have I done, O Lord, that Thou shouldst impart to me some heavenly consolation?

I can remember nothing of good that I have ever done, that I was always prone to vice, and very slow towards amendment.

It is true, and I cannot deny it; if I should say otherwise, Thou wouldst stand against me, and there would be none to defend me.

What have I deserved for my sins but hell and everlasting fire?

In truth I confess that I am worthy of all scorn and contempt; neither is it fitting that I should remain among Thy devout ones.

And although I hear this unwillingly, yet, for truth's sake, I will, against myself, condemn my sins, that so I may the easier deserve to obtain Thy mercy.

3. What shall I say, guilty as I am, and full of all confusion?

My mouth can utter nothing but only this one word: I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned; have mercy on me and pardon me.

Suffer me a little, that I may mourn out my grief, before I go to the darksome land that is covered with the dismal shade of death.

What dost Thou especially require of a guilty and wretched sinner, but that he should be contrite and humble himself for his sins?

In true contrition and humility of heart is brought forth hope of forgiveness; the troubled conscience is reconciled; lost grace is recovered; man is secured from the wrath to come; and God and the penitent soul meet together with a holy kiss.

4. Humble contrition for sins is an acceptable sacrifice to Thee, O Lord, of far sweeter odour in Thy sight than the burning of frankincense.

This is also that pleasing ointment which Thou wouldst have to be poured upon Thy sacred feet; for Thou never hast despised a contrite and humble heart.

Here is a place of refuge from the face of the wrath of the enemy.

Here is amended and washed away whatever of defilement has been elsewhere contracted.

Chapter LIII

That the Grace of God is not Communicated to the Earthly-minded

Son, My grace is precious; it suffereth not itself to be mingled with external things nor with earthly consolations. Thou must, therefore, cast away every obstacle to grace, if thou desire to receive its infusion.

Choose for thyself a retired place; love to dwell with thyself alone; seek not to be talking with anyone, but rather pour forth devout prayer to God, that thou mayest keep thy mind in compunction and thy conscience pure.

Esteem the whole world as nothing; prefer attendance on God before all external occupations.

For thou canst not both attend to Me and at the same time delight thyself in transitory things.

Thou must be sequestered from thy acquaintance and from thy dearest friends, and keep thy mind disengaged from all temporal consolation.

So the blessed Apostle Peter beseeches the faithful of Christ to keep themselves as strangers and pilgrims in this world.

2. Oh, what great confidence shall he have at death, who is not detained by an affection to anything in the world!

But an infirm soul is not yet capable of having a heart thus perfectly disengaged from all things, neither doth the animal man understand the liberty of interior man.

But if he will be truly spiritual, he must renounce as well those that are near as those that are afar off, and beware of none more than of himself.

If thou perfectly overcomest thyself, thou shalt more easily subdue all things else.

The perfect victory is to triumph over oneself.

For whosoever keepeth himself in subjection, so that sensuality obeyeth reason, and reason in all things is obedient to Me, he is indeed a conqueror of himself and lord of the world.

3. If thou longest to climb this eminence, thou must begin manfully, and lay the axe to the root, in order to pluck out and

destroy secret and inordinate inclination to thyself and to every private and material good.

From this vice, that man loveth self too inordinately, depends almost all, whatsoever must be radically overcome; which being vanquished and brought under, a great peace and tranquillity will immediately ensue.

But because few labour to die perfectly to themselves, or fully to aim out of themselves, therefore do they remain entangled in themselves, nor can they be elevated in spirit above themselves.

But whoever desireth to walk freely with Me, it is necessary that he mortify all his perverse and inordinate affections, and not cleave with particular love or concupiscence to anything created.

Chapter LIV

Of the Different Motions of Nature and Grace

SON, observe diligently the motions of nature and grace; for they move with great contrariety and subtlety, and can hardly be distinguished but by a spiritual man, and one that is inwardly illuminated.

All men indeed desire good, and pretend to something good in what they say and do; therefore, under the appearance of good, many are deceived.

2. Nature is crafty and draweth away many, ensnareth them and deceiveth them, and always proposeth self as her end.

But grace walketh in simplicity, turneth aside from all appearance of evil, offereth no deceits, and doth all things purely for God, in whom also it resteth as its last end.

3. Nature is neither willing to be mortified, to be restrained, to be overcome, nor to be subject, neither of its own accord to be brought under obedience.

But grace studieth the mortification of self, resisteth sensuality, seeketh to be subject, coveteth to be overcome, aimeth not at enjoying its own liberty, loveth to be kept under discipline, and desireth not to have the command over anyone; but under God ever to live, stand, and be, and for God's sake is ever ready humbly to bow down unto every human creature.

4. Nature laboureth for its own interest, and considereth what gain it may derive from another.

But grace considereth not what may be advantageous and profitable to self, but rather what may be beneficial to many.

5. Nature willingly receiveth honour and respect.

But grace faithfully attributeth honour and glory to God.

6. Nature is afraid of shame and contempt.

But grace is glad to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.

7. Nature loveth ease and bodily repose.

But grace cannot be idle, and willingly embraceth labour.

8. Nature seeketh to have things that are curious and beautiful, and abhorreth such as are cheap and coarse.

But grace delighteth in that which is plain and humble,

rejecteth not coarse things, nor refuseth to be clad in old garments.

9. Nature hath regard to temporal things, rejoiceth at earthly gains, is troubled at losses, and is irritated at every slight injurious word.

But grace attendeth to things eternal, and cleaveth not to temporal things; neither is disturbed at the loss of things nor exasperated with hard words, for it placeth its treasure and its joy in heaven, where nothing perisheth.

10. Nature is covetous, and liketh rather to take than to give, and loveth to have things exclusive and private.

But grace is kind and open-hearted, shunneth private interest, is contented with little, and judgeth it more blessed to give than to receive.

11. Nature inclineth a man to creatures, to his own body, to vanities, and to running to and fro.

But grace draweth to God and to all virtues, renounceth creatures, flieth the world, hateth the desires of the flesh, restraineth wanderings, blusheth to appear in public.

12. Nature willingly receiveth some exterior comfort, in which the senses may be gratified.

But grace seeketh to be comforted in God alone, and beyond all things visible to be delighted in the Sovereign Good.

13. Nature doth all for her own gain and interest; she can do nothing *gratis*, but hopeth to gain something equal or better for her good deeds, or else praise or favour, and coveteth to have her actions and gifts and saying highly estimated.

But grace seeketh nothing temporal, nor requireth any other recompense but God alone for its reward, nor desireth anything more of the necessaries of this life than may serve her to obtain things eternal.

14. Nature rejoiceth in a multitude of friends and kindred, glorieth in noble place and descent, smileth on them that are in power, flattereth the rich and applaudeth such as are like itself.

But grace loveth even enemies, and is not puffed up with having a great many friends, nor hath any value for rank or birth, unless when joined with greater virtue; rather favoureth the poor than the rich, sympathizing more with the innocent than with the powerful; rejoiceth with him that loveth the truth, and not with the deceitful; ever exhorteth the good to be zealous for better gifts, and by the exercise of virtues to become like to the Son of God.

15. Nature easily complaineth of want and of trouble.

Grace beareth poverty with constancy.

16. Nature turneth all things to self, and contendeth and disputeth for self.

But grace referreth all things to God, from whom they originally proceed; attributeth no good to self, nor doth she arrogantly presume.

Grace doth not contend nor prefer her own opinion to others, but in every feeling and understanding submitteth herself to the eternal Wisdom and to the divine scrutiny.

17. Nature coveteth to know secrets, and to hear news; desireth to appear abroad, and to have experience of many things by the senses; longeth to be taken notice of, and to do those things which may procure praise and admiration.

But grace careth not for the hearing of things new or curious, because all this springeth from the old corruption, since nothing is new or lasting upon earth.

Grace teacheth, therefore, to restrain the senses, to avoid vain complacency and ostentations, humbly to hide those things which are worthy of praise and admiration, and from everything, and in every knowledge, to seek the fruit of utility and the praise and honour of God.

She desireth not to have self, or what belongeth to self, exalted, but wisheth that God may be blessed in His gifts, who bestoweth all things through mere love.

18. This grace is a supernatural light, and a certain special gift of God, the proper mark of the elect, and pledge of eternal salvation, which elevateth a man from earthly things to love such as are heavenly, and from carnal maketh him spiritual.

Wherefore, as nature is the more kept down and subdued, with so much the greater abundance is grace infused; and every day, by new visitations, the interior man is reformed according to the image of God.

Chapter LV

Of the Corruption of Nature and of the Efficacy of Divine Grace

O Lord, my God, who hast created me to Thine own image and likeness, grant me this grace, which Thou hast shown to be so great and so necessary to salvation, that I may overcome my most corrupt nature which draweth me to sin and to perdition.

For I perceive in my flesh the law of sin contradicting the law of my mind, and leading me captive to obey sensuality in many things.

Neither can I resist the passion thereof, unless Thy most holy grace, infused with fervour into my heart, assist me.

2. I stand in need of Thy grace and of great grace, in order to overcome nature, always prone to evil from its youth.

For fallen as it is through the first man Adam, and corrupted by sin, the punishment of that stain hath descended upon all mankind; so that nature itself, which by thee was created good and right, is now taken for vice and the infirmity of corrupt nature, because the motion thereof, left to itself, draweth to evil and to things below.

For the little strength which remaineth is but as a little spark hidden under ashes.

This is the selfsame natural reason encompassed with much darkness, having yet the judgment of good and evil, and the discernment of truth and falsehood, though it be unable to fulfil all that it approves; neither doth it now enjoy the full light of truth, nor the former healthfulness of its affections.

3. Hence it is, O my God, that, according to the inward man, I am delighted with Thy law, knowing Thy command to be good, just, and holy, both for the reproval of all evil and for the avoiding of sin.

And yet in the flesh I serve the law of sin while I obey sensuality rather than reason.

Hence it is that to will that which is good is present with me, but how to accomplish it I find not.

Hence I often make many good purposes, but because grace is wanting to help my weakness, through a light resistance I recoil and fall off.

Hence cometh it to pass, that I know the way of perfection, and see clearly enough what I ought to do, but pressed down with the weight of my own corruption, I rise not to the things that are more perfect.

4. Oh, how supremely necessary for me, O Lord, is Thy grace, to begin that which is good to go forward with it, and accomplish it.

For without it I can do nothing; but I can do all things in Thee, when grace strengtheneth me.

Oh, grace, truly celestial, without which our own merits are nothing, neither are the gifts of nature to be esteemed!

No arts, nor riches, nor beauty, nor strength, nor genius, nor eloquence avail aught in Thy sight, O Lord, without grace.

For the gifts of nature are common to the good and to the bad; but grace or divine love is the proper gift of the elect, with which they that are adorned are esteemed worthy of eternal life.

This grace is so excellent that neither the gift of prophecy, nor the working of miracles, nor any speculation, how sublime soever, is of any value without it.

No, not even faith, nor hope, nor any other virtues, are acceptable to Thee without charity and grace.

5. Oh, most blessed grace, which maketh the poor in spirit rich in virtues, and renderest him who is rich in many good things humble of heart, come, descend upon me, replenish me early with thy consolation, lest my soul faint through weariness and dryness of mind.

I beseech Thee, O Lord, that I may find grace in Thine eyes; for sufficient for me is Thy grace, though I obtain none of those things which nature desires.

If I be tempted and afflicted with many tribulations, I will fear no evils whilst Thy grace is with me.

This alone is my strength, this alone giveth counsel and help.

This is more mighty than all my enemies, and wiser than all the wise.

6. Thy grace is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the consoler of anguish, the banisher of sorrow, the expeller of fear, the nurse of devotion, the producer of tears.

What am I, without this, but a withered branch and a useless trunk, meet only to be cast away?

Therefore, O Lord, let Thy grace always go before and follow me, and make me ever intent upon good works, through Jesus Christ Thy Son. Amen.

Chapter LVI

That We ought to Deny Ourselves, and Imitate Christ by the Cross

SON, as much as thou canst go out of thyself, so much wilt thou be able to enter into Me.

As the desiring nothing exteriorly bringeth peace, so doth the relinquishing thyself interiorly unite thee unto God.

I will have thee learn the perfect renunciation of thyself, according to My will, without contradiction or complaint.

Follow Me: I am the way, the truth, and the life.

Without the way, there is no going; without the truth, there is no knowing; without the life, there is no living.

I am the way which thou must follow, the truth which thou must believe, the life which thou must hope for.

I am the way inviolable, the truth infallible, the life interminable.

I am the straightest way, the sovereign truth, the true life, the blessed life, the uncreated life.

If thou abide in My way, thou shalt know the truth, and the truth shall make thee free, and thou shalt attain life everlasting.

2. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

If thou wilt know the truth, believe Me; if thou wilt be perfect, sell all.

If thou wilt be My disciple, deny thyself.

If thou wilt possess a blessed life, despise this present life.

If thou wilt be exalted in heaven, humble thyself in this world.

If thou wilt reign with me, bear the Cross with Me.

For none but the servants of the Cross find the way of bliss and true light.

3. Lord Jesus, for as much as Thy way is narrow, and despised by the world, grant that I may follow Thee with the world's contempt.

For the servant is not greater than his lord, neither is the disciple above his master.

Let Thy servant be exercised in Thy life, for there is my salvation and true sanctification.

Whatever beside this I read or hear doth neither recreate nor fully delight me.

4. Son, since thou knowest these things, and hast read them all, happy shalt thou be if thou do them.

He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and I will love him, and I will manifest Myself unto him, and I will make him sit with me in the kingdom of My Father.

5. Lord Jesus, as Thou hast said and hast promised, so let it be indeed, and may it be my lot to merit it.

I have received, I have received from Thy hand, the Cross; I will bear it, and bear it even unto death, as Thou hast laid it upon me.

Truly, the life of the good religious is a cross, but it is also the guide to paradise.

We have begun; we may not go back, nor may we leave off.

6. Take courage, brethren; let us go forward together; Jesus will be with us.

For the sake of Jesus we have taken up this Cross: for Jesus' sake let us persevere in it.

He will be our Helper, who is our Captain and our Forerunner.

Behold, our King marcheth before us, who will fight for us.

Let us follow Him manfully, let no one fear terror; let us be ready to die valiantly in battle; nor let us bring disgrace upon our glory by flying from the Cross.

Chapter LVII

That a Man should not be too much Dejected when He Falls into Some Defects

Son, patience and humility under adversity please Me more than much consolation and devotion in prosperity.

Why art thou afflicted at a little matter said against thee? If it had been more, thou oughtest not to have been disturbed.

But now let it pass; it is not the first, or anything new; nor will it be the last, if thou live long.

Thou art valiant enough, so long as no adversity cometh in thy way.

Thou canst also give good advice, and knowest how to encourage others with thy speech; but when any unexpected trouble cometh at thine own door, then thy counsel and thy courage fail thee.

Consider thy great frailty, which thou often experiencest in trifling occurrences; yet still do they happen for thy salvation, as often as these or similar trials befall thee.

2. Put it out of thy heart as well as thou canst; and if tribulation have touched thee, yet let it not cast thee down, nor long entangle thee.

At least bear it patiently if thou canst not joyfully.

And although thou be reluctant to bear it, and feelest indignation, yet repress thyself, and suffer no inordinate word to come out of thy mouth, whereby little ones may be offended.

This commotion excited will quickly be allayed, and inward grief will be sweetened by returning grace.

I still live, saith the Lord, ready to help thee, and comfort thee more than before, if thou put thy trust in Me, and devoutly call upon Me.

3. Be thou even-minded, and gird thyself for greater endurance.

All is not lost, though thou feel thyself often afflicted or grievously tempted.

Man thou art, and not God; thou art flesh, not an Angel.

How canst thou continue ever in the same state of virtue,

when this was wanting to the Angels in heaven, and to the first man in paradise?

I am He who raiseth up to safety them that mourn; and them that know their own infirmity I promote to My own divinity.

4. O Lord, blessed be Thy word; it is sweeter to my mouth than honey and the honeycomb.

What should I do in my so great tribulations and necessities, didst Thou not strengthen me with Thy holy words?

Provided only I shall reach at last the haven of salvation, what doth it matter how many or how great trials I shall have endured?

Grant me a good end, grant me a happy passage out of this world.

Be mindful of me, O my God, and direct me in the right path to Thy kingdom. Amen.

Chapter LVIII

Of not Searching into High Matters, nor Scrutinizing the Secret Judgments of God

Son, beware of disputing about high matters and of the hidden judgments of God: why this man is so forsaken and that other raised to so great grace, or why this person is so much afflicted and that so highly exalted.

Such things exceed all human comprehension, nor is any reason or disputation competent to investigate the divine judgments.

When, therefore, the enemy suggesteth such to thee, or certain curious men inquire into them, answer thou with the Prophet: Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right. And again: The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves.

My judgments are to be feared, not to be discussed, because they are incomprehensible to human understanding.

2. In like manner, do not be inquisitive or dispute concerning the merits of the Saints: who is more holy than another, or who greater in the kingdom of heaven?

Such oftentimes breed strifes and unprofitable contention, and nourish also pride and vain-glory; whence arise envies and dissensions, while one man proudly prefers this Saint, and another that.

Now, to wish to know and to search into such matters is of no profit, but rather displeaseth the Saints; for I am not the God of dissension, but of peace, which peace consisteth rather in true humility than in self-exaltation.

3. Some by zeal of preference are attracted with greater affection towards these or those Saints; but this affection is rather human than divine.

I am He who made all the Saints; I gave them grace, I have granted them glory.

I know the merits of each; I prevented them with the blessings of My sweetness.

I foreknew My beloved ones before all ages.

I chose them out of the world; they did not first choose Me.

I called them by grace, I attracted them by mercy, I brought

them safe through many temptations, I poured into them abundant consolations, I gave them perseverance, I have crowned their patience.

4. I know the first and the last; I embrace all with an inestimable love.

I am to be praised in all My Saints; I am to be blessed above all, and to be honoured in each, whom I have so gloriously magnified and predestinated, without any foregoing merits of their own.

He, therefore, that despiseth one of the least of My Saints honoureth not the greatest; for I have made both little and great.

And he that derogateth from any one of the Saints derogateth also from Me, and from all others in the kingdom of heaven.

They are all one through the bond of love, they have the same thoughts, the same will, and all love themselves each in the other.

5. And moreover, what is more exalted still, they love Me more than themselves and their own merits.

For, rapt above themselves, and drawn away altogether from love of self, they live absorbed in the love of Me, in whom also they rest by a happy fruition.

Nor is there anything that can turn them away or depress them; for they who are full of the Eternal Truth, burn with the fire of unquenchable charity.

Therefore, let carnal and animal men, who know not how to love anything but their own selfish gratifications, forbear to dispute of the state of the Saints. They take away and add according to their own inclination, not as it pleaseth the Eternal Truth.

6. In many it is ignorance, more especially on the part of such as, being but little enlightened, seldom know how to love anyone with a perfect spiritual love.

They are as yet much inclined to such or such by a natural affection and human friendship; and as they are habituated with regard to things below, so they conceive the like imaginations of the things of heaven.

But the distance is incomparable between the notions which the imperfect conceive and those which the illuminated behold through revelation from above.

7. Take heed, therefore, son, of treating too curiously of those things which exceed thy knowledge; but make it rather thy business and aim that thou mayest be found, though even the least, in the kingdom of God.

And if anyone could know who were the holier or the greater in the kingdom of heaven, what would this knowledge profit him, unless he should from this knowledge humble himself in My sight, and rise to the greater praise of My name?

That man is much more acceptable to God, who thinketh of the greatness of his own sins, how little he is advanced in virtue, and at how great a distance he is from the perfection of the Saints, than he who disputeth which of them is the greater, which the less.

It is better to supplicate the Saints in devout prayers and tears, and with an humble mind to implore their glorious suffrages, than by a vain inquisitiveness to search into their secrets.

8. They are well and perfectly contented, if men would but be contented and bridle their vain discourses.

They glory not in their own merits; for they ascribe nothing of goodness to themselves, but all to Me, because I gave all to them out of my infinite charity.

They are filled with so great a love of the Deity, and with joy so overflowing, that there is nothing wanting to their glory, nor can anything be wanting to their felicity.

All the Saints, the higher they are in glory, the more humble they are in themselves, the nearer to Me, and the more beloved by Me.

And therefore thou hast it written that they cast down their crowns before God, and fell on their faces before the Lamb, and adored Him that liveth for ever and ever.

9. Many inquire who is the greater in the kingdom of God, who themselves know not whether they shall be worthy to be numbered among the least.

It is a great thing to be even the least in heaven, where all are great; because all shall be called, and shall be the children of God.

The least shall be as a thousand, and the sinner of a hundred years shall die.

For when the disciples asked who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, they received this answer:

Unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little one, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven.

10. Woe to them who disdain to humble themselves willingly

with the children; for the lowly gate of the heavenly kingdom will not admit them to enter.

Woe also to the rich, who have their consolation here.

For when the poor enter into the kingdom of God, they shall stand lamenting without.

Rejoice, ye humble, and be glad, ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God—if, at least, you walk in the truth.

Chapter LIX

That all Hope and Confidence is to be Fixed in God Alone

LORD, what is my confidence which I have in this life, or what is my greatest solace amongst all the things that appear under heaven?

Is it not Thou, my Lord God, of whose mercies there is no number?

Where was it ever well to me without Thee, or when was it ever ill with me, when Thou wast present?

I had rather be poor for Thy sake, than rich without Thee.

I prefer rather to sojourn upon earth with Thee than to possess heaven without Thee.

Where Thou art, there is heaven; and there is death and hell, where Thou art not.

Thou art all my desire, and therefore I must needs sigh after Thee, and cry and pray.

In short, I cannot fully confide in anyone to bring me seasonable help in my necessities, save only in Thee, my God.

Thou art my hope, my confidence, my comforter, and in all things most faithful.

2. All seek the things that are their own; Thou designest only my salvation and profit, and turnest all things to my good.

And although Thou exposeth me to various temptations and adversities, yet all this Thou ordainest for my good, who art wont to prove Thy beloved servants a thousand ways.

Under which probation Thou oughtest not less to be loved and praised, than if thou didst replenish me with heavenly consolations.

3. In Thee, therefore, O Lord God, do I place all my hope and refuge; on Thee I cast all my tribulation and anguish; for I find all to be weak and inconstant, whatever I behold out of Thee.

For neither will many friends be of service to me, nor can powerful auxiliaries assist me, nor wise counsellors give me a profitable reply, nor the books of the learned give me consolation, nor any precious substance ransom me, nor any secret place secure me, if Thou Thyself do not assist, help, strengthen, comfort, instruct, and guard me.

4. For all things which seem to be for our peace and for our happiness, when Thou art absent, are nothing, and contribute nothing to our felicity.

Thou, therefore, art the fountain of all good, the height of life, and the depth of wisdom; and to trust in Thee above all things is the strongest comfort of Thy servants.

Unto Thee do I lift up mine eyes; in Thee, O my God, Father of mercies, I put my trust.

Bless and sanctify my soul with heavenly benediction, that it may be made Thy holy habitation and the seat of Thy eternal glory; and let nothing be found in the Temple of Thy divinity, that may offend the eyes of Thy Majesty.

According to the greatness of Thy goodness and the multitude of Thy tender mercies, look down upon me, and give ear to the prayer of Thy poor servant, a far distant exile in the region of the shadow of death.

Protect and preserve the soul of Thy poor servant amid so many dangers of this corruptible life, and direct him by Thy accompanying grace along the path of peace, to the land of perpetual light. Amen.

BOOK FOURTH

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

COME to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you, saith the Lord.

The bread that I will give is My Flesh, for the life of the world.

Take ye and eat; this is My Body, which shall be delivered for you; this do for the commemoration of Me.

He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me and I in him.

The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

Chapter I

With how Great Reverence Christ ought to be Received

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

THESE are Thy words, O Christ, the Eternal Truth, though not all uttered at one time, nor written in one place.

Since, therefore, they are Thine, and true, they ought all to be thankfully and faithfully received by me.

They are Thine, and Thou hast spoken them; and they are also mine, because Thou hast delivered them for my salvation.

I willingly receive them from Thy mouth, that they may be the more inseparably engrafted in my heart.

Words of so great tenderness, so full of sweetness and love, encourage me; but my own sins terrify me, and an unclean conscience driveth me back from receiving so great mysteries.

The sweetness of Thy words beckoneth me onwards; but the multitude of my offences weigheth me down.

2. Thou commandest me to approach to Thee with confidence, if I would have part with Thee; and to receive the food of immortality, if I desire to obtain life and glory everlasting.

Come, sayest Thou to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.

O sweet and loving word in the ear of a sinner, that Thou, O Lord my God, dost invite the poor and needy to the Communion of Thy most holy Body!

But who am I, O Lord, that I should presume to approach unto Thee?

Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; and Thou sayest: Come ye all to Me.

3. What meaneth this most loving condescension and so friendly invitation?

How shall I dare to approach, who am conscious to myself of no good on which I can presume?

How shall I introduce Thee into my house, who have too often offended Thy most benign countenance?

The angels and the archangels stand in reverential awe; the

Saints and the just are afraid; and Thou sayest: Come ye all to Me.

Unless Thou, O Lord, didst say this, who could believe it to be true?

And unless Thou didst command it, who would venture to approach?

4. Behold, Noe, a just man, laboured a hundred years in building the ark, that, with a few, he might be saved; and how, then, shall I be able, in the space of one hour, to prepare myself to receive with reverence the Maker of the world?

Moses, Thy great servant and Thy special friend, made an Ark of incorruptible wood, which also he covered with most pure gold, that he might deposit therein the tables of the law; and I, a corrupted creature, shall I presume so easily to receive Thee, the Maker of the law and the Giver of life?

Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel, employed seven years in building a magnificent temple for the praise of Thy Name, and for eight days he celebrated the feast of the dedication thereof; he offered a thousand peace-making victims, and brought, in a solemn manner, the Ark of the Covenant into the place prepared for it, with sound of trumpet and rejoicing; and I, unhappy, and the vilest of men, how shall I introduce Thee into my house, who can hardly spend one half-hour devoutly? And would that I had ever even once spent one half-hour as I ought!

5. O my God, how much did they endeavour to do to please Thee! Alas, how little is it that I do! How short a time do I spend when I prepare myself to communicate!

Seldom am I wholly collected, very seldom free from all distraction.

And yet surely in the life-giving presence of Thy Deity, no unbecoming thought should occur, nor anything created occupy my mind; for it is not an angel, but the Lord of the angels whom I am about to entertain.

6. There is, moreover, a very great difference between the Ark of the Covenant with its relics, and Thy most pure Body, with its unspeakable virtues; between those sacrifices of the law, which were figures of things to come, and the true Sacrifice of Thy Body, which is the accomplishment of all ancient sacrifices.

7. Why, then, am I not more inflamed in seeking Thy adorable presence?

Why do I not prepare myself with greater solicitude to receive

Thy sacred gifts, seeing that those ancient holy Patriarchs and Prophets, yea, kings also and princes, with the whole people, manifested so great affection of devotion towards Thy divine worship?

8. The most devout King David danced with all his might before the Ark of God, as he called to mind the benefits in times past bestowed upon his fathers; he made musical instruments of various kinds; he composed psalms, and appointed them to be sung with joy, and he himself likewise often sung them upon his harp, inspired with the grace of the Holy Ghost; he taught the people of Israel to praise God with their whole heart, and with one harmonious voice to bless and praise Him every day.

If so great devotion was then displayed, and such a memorial of the praise of God made in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant, how great a reverence and devotion now ought I and all Christian people to have in presence of this Sacrament, and in receiving the most precious Body of Christ!

9. Many run to sundry places to visit the relics of the Saints, and wonder to hear of their remarkable deeds; they behold the spacious buildings of their churches, and kiss their sacred bones, enveloped in silk and gold.

And behold, Thou art here present to me on the altar, my God, the Saint of Saints, the Creator of Men, and the Lord of Angels.

Oftentimes in seeing those things, men are moved with curiosity and the novelty of sights, and carry home but little fruit of amendment; and the more so when persons run lightly hither and thither, without real contrition.

But here, in the Sacrament of the altar, Thou art wholly present, my God, the man Christ Jesus; where also is derived, in full copiousness, the fruit of eternal salvation, as often as Thou art worthily and devoutly received.

To this, indeed, we are not drawn by any levity, curiosity, or sensuality but by a firm faith, a devout hope, and a sincere charity.

10. O God, unseen Creator of the world, how wonderfully dost Thou deal with us! how sweetly and graciously dost Thou order all things for Thy elect, to whom Thou offerest Thyself to be received in this Sacrament!

For this exceedeth all understanding; this in a particular manner draweth the heart of the devout, and enkindleth their love.

For they, Thy faithful ones, who dispose their whole life to

amendment, frequently receive from this most august Sacrament a great grace of devotion and love of virtue.

11. Oh, the wonderful and hidden grace of the Sacrament, which only the faithful of Christ know, but which unbelievers, and such as are slaves to sin, cannot experience!

In this Sacrament is conferred spiritual grace; virtue lost is again restored in the soul; and beauty, disfigured by sin, returneth again.

So great sometimes is this grace that, from the fulness of the devotion conferred, not only the mind, but the frail body also feeleth an increase of strength bestowed on it.

12. Still must we lament and deplore exceedingly our tepidity and negligence, that we are not drawn with greater affection to receive Christ, in whom consisteth all the hope and merit of those that are to be saved.

For He is our sanctification and our redemption; He is the consolation of pilgrims, and the eternal fruition of the Saints.

Greatly to be lamented, therefore, is it, that many take so little heed of this saving Mystery, which rejoiceth heaven and preserveth the whole world.

Oh, blindness and hardness of the heart of man, that doth not more regard so unspeakable a gift, or even from a daily use of it falleth into as disregard of it!

13. For if this most holy Sacrament were celebrated in one place only, and consecrated by only one priest in the world, with how great a desire, thinkest thou, would men be affected towards that place, and to such a priest of God, that they might see the divine Mysteries celebrated?

But now that there are many priests, and Christ is offered up in many places, that the grace and love of God to man may appear so much the greater, by how much the more bounteously is this sacred Communion distributed throughout the entire world.

Thanks be to Thee, O good Jesus, eternal Shepherd, who hast vouchsafed to feed us, poor exiles, with Thy precious Body and Blood, and to invite us to the receiving of these Mysteries, even by an address from Thy own mouth, saying: Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.

Chapter II

That the Great Goodness and Love of God are Shown to Man in this Sacrament

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

CONFIDING, O Lord, in Thy goodness, and in Thy great mercy, I come sick to my Saviour, hungry and thirsty to the Fountain of life, needy to the King of heaven, a servant to my Lord, a creature to my Creator, and one in desolation to my loving Comforter.

But whence is this to me, that Thou shouldst come to me? who am I, that Thou shouldst give to me Thyself?

How dare a sinner appear before Thee? and how dost Thou vouchsafe to come to a sinner?

Thou knowest Thy servant, and dost know that he has nothing of good in himself, wherefore Thou shouldst bestow this upon him.

I confess, therefore my unworthiness; I acknowledge Thy bounty; I praise Thy goodness; and I give Thee thanks for Thy exceeding love.

For it is for Thy own sake Thou dost this, not on account of my merits—that Thy goodness may be the more manifest to me, that Thy love may be more abundantly imparted, and Thy humility more perfectly commended.

Since, therefore, this pleaseth Thee, and Thou hast ordained it thus, Thy merciful condescension pleaseth me also; and, oh! that my iniquity may be no obstacle!

2. O most sweet and most benign Jesus, how great reverence and thanksgiving, with perpetual praise, are due to Thee for the receiving of Thy sacred Body, whose dignity no man can be found able to unfold!

But on what shall I think in this Communion, when I approach to my Lord, whom I can never duly venerate, and yet desire to receive with devotion?

What can I think on better or more salutary than to humble

myself entirely before Thee and extol Thy infinite goodness above me?

I praise Thee, O my God, and I extol Thee forever; I despise myself, and cast myself down into the depth of my own vileness.

3. Behold, Thou art the Saint of Saints, and I am the scum of sinners.

Behold, Thou bowest Thyself down to me, who am not worthy to look up to Thee.

Behold, Thou comest to me; Thou wishest to be with me; Thou invitest me to Thy banquet; Thou desirest to give me heavenly food, even the bread of angels, to eat; no other, indeed, than Thyself, the living Bread, who didst come down from heaven, and givest life to the world.

4. Behold, whence love proceedeth; what a condescension shineth forth! how great thanksgiving and praise are due to Thee for these!

Oh, how salutary and profitable was Thy design when Thou didst institute it! how sweet and delightful this banquet, wherein Thou hast given Thyself for our food!

Oh, how admirable is Thy work, O Lord! how mighty is Thy power! how infallible Thy truth!

For Thou hast spoken, and all things were made, and that which Thou commandest has been done.

5. A wonderful thing it is, and worthy of faith, and transcending all human intelligence, that Thou, O Lord my God, true God and man, art contained entire under a small form of bread and wine, art eaten by the receiver, and without being consumed.

Thou, the Lord of all things, who standest in need of no one, art pleased by this Sacrament to dwell in us.

Preserve my heart and my body immaculate, that, with a joyful and pure conscience, I may often be able to celebrate Thy sacred Mysteries, and receive for my eternal salvation what Thou hast principally ordained and instituted for Thy honour and perpetual remembrance.

6. Rejoice, O my soul, and give thanks unto God for so noble a gift and so singular a solace left to thee in this valley of tears.

For as often as thou repeatest this Mystery and receivest the Body of Christ, so often dost thou perform the work of thy redemption, and art made partaker of all the merits of Christ.

For the charity of Christ is never diminished, and the greatness of His propitiation is never exhausted.

Therefore oughtest thou to dispose thyself for this by an ever-recurring renovation of spirit, and weigh with attentive consideration the great mystery of salvation.

And as often as thou celebratest or hearest Mass, it ought to seem to thee as great, new and delightful, as if Christ, that very day first descending into the Virgin's womb, was made man, or, hanging on the Cross, suffered and died for man's salvation.

Chapter III

That it is Profitable to Communicate Often

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

Behold, I come to Thee, O Lord, that, by Thy gift, it may be well with me, and that I may be delighted in Thy holy banquet which Thou, O God, hast prepared in sweetness for the poor.

Behold, in Thee is all that I can or ought to desire; Thou art my salvation and redemption, my hope and my strength, my honour and my glory.

Make, therefore, the soul of Thy servant joyful this day, because unto Thee, O Lord Jesus, have I lifted up my soul.

Now do I desire to receive Thee devoutly and reverently; I long to bring Thee into my house, so that, with Zaccheus, I may deserve to be blessed by Thee, and to be numbered amongst the children of Abraham.

My soul longeth eagerly after Thy Body; my heart desireth to be united with Thee.

2. Give Thyself to me, and it is enough; for without Thee no comfort is of any avail.

Without Thee I cannot exist; and without Thy visitation I am unable to live.

Therefore must I often come to Thee, and receive Thee as the medicine of my salvation, lest perhaps I faint in the way, should I be deprived of this heavenly food.

For so Thou, O most merciful Jesus, when Thou hadst been preaching to the people and curing their various maladies, didst once say: I will not send them fasting to their home, lest they faint by the way.

Deal with me, therefore, in like manner, who hast left Thyself in this Sacrament for the comfort of the Faithful.

For Thou art the sweet refection of the soul, and he that shall eat Thee worthily, shall be partaker and heir of everlasting glory.

Necessary, indeed, is it for me, who so often fall and commit sin, so quickly grow torpid and faint, that by frequent prayers and confessions, and by the sacred receiving of Thy Body, I may

again be renewed, cleansed, and inflamed, lest, perhaps, by longer abstaining, I fall away from my holy purpose.

3. For prone are the senses of man to evil from his youth; and unless the divine medicine succour him, he quickly falleth to worse things.

The Holy Communion, therefore, withdraweth from evil, and strengtheneth in good.

For if now I am so often negligent and lukewarm, whenever I communicate or celebrate,* what would it be if I did not take this remedy, and did not seek so great a help?

And although I am not every day prepared nor well disposed to celebrate, yet I will endeavour at certain times to receive the divine Mysteries, and to make myself partaker of so great a grace.

For this is the one chief consolation of a faithful soul, so long as she sojourneth afar off from Thee in this mortal body, that, mindful of her God, she receives her Beloved with a devout mind.

4. O wonderful condescension of Thy affection towards us! that Thou, O Lord God, the Creator and Giver of life to all spirits, shouldst vouchsafe to come to a poor soul, and with Thy whole divinity and humanity to feast her hunger with fatness.

O happy mind and blessed soul! which deserveth to receive Thee, her Lord God, devoutly, and in receiving Thee to be filled with spiritual joy.

Oh, how great a Lord doth she entertain, how beloved a Guest doth she bring into her house, how sweet a Companion doth she receive, how faithful a Friend doth she welcome, how beautiful and noble a Spouse doth she embrace, to be loved above all beloved, and beyond all that can be desired.

Let heaven and earth, O my most sweet Beloved, with all their attire, be silent before Thy face; for whatever of glory or beauty they possess, all is the gift of Thy bounty; nor can they attain to the beauty of Thy Name whose wisdom is beyond all numbers.

* It will be observed that portions of this chapter are applicable only to priests.

Chapter IV

That Many Benefits are Bestowed on those who Communicate Devoutly

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

O Lord my God, present Thy servant with the blessings of Thy sweetness, that I may deserve to approach worthily and devoutly to Thy magnificent Sacrament.

Raise up my heart towards Thee, and deliver me from oppressive slothfulness.

Visit me with Thy saving mercy, that I may taste in spirit Thy sweetness, which plentifully lieth hid in this Sacrament, as in a fountain.

Illuminate also my eyes, to behold so great a Mystery, and strengthen me to believe it with an undoubting faith.

For it is Thy work, and not man's power; Thy sacred institution, not the invention of man.

For no one can be found capable of himself to conceive and understand these things, which transcend even the intelligence of the angels.

What, then, of so high and sacred a mystery shall I, an unworthy sinner, who am but earth and ashes, be able to investigate or comprehend?

2. O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, with a good firm faith, and at Thy command, I come to Thee with hope and reverence; and I believe truly that Thou art here present in the Sacrament, both God and Man.

Thou willest, then, that I receive Thee, and unite myself to Thee in charity.

Wherefore I beseech Thy clemency, and I beg of Thee to give me a special grace, that I may be wholly dissolved in Thee, and overflow with Thy love, and no more concern myself about any other kind of consolation.

For this most high and most worthy Sacrament is the health of soul and body, the medicine of every spiritual malady, in which

my vices are cured, my passions restrained, temptations overcome or lessened, greater grace infused, incipient virtue increased, faith confirmed, hope strengthened, and charity inflamed and enlarged.

3. For thou hast bestowed, and still oftentimes dost bestow, many good things in this Sacrament to Thy beloved who communicate devoutly, O my God, the support of my soul, the repairer of human infirmity, and the giver of all interior consolation.

For Thou impartest unto them much consolation against their various tribulations, and Thou liftest them up from the depth of their own dejection to the hope of Thy protection, and Thou dost interiorly recreate and enlighten them with a certain new grace; so that they who first were anxious, and without sensible affection before Communion, after being refreshed with this heavenly food and drink, find themselves changed for the better.

And in such a way Thou art pleased to deal with Thine elect, that they may more truly acknowledge and plainly experience how great is their weakness when left to themselves, and how much of bounty and grace they receive from Thee.

For of themselves they are cold, dry, and indevout; but by Thee they deserve to become fervent, cheerful, and devout.

For who, humbly approaching to the fountain of sweetness, doth not carry thence some little sweetness?

Or who, standing by a copious fire, doth not derive therefrom some little heat?

And Thou art a fountain ever full and overflowing; Thou art a fire always burning and never failing.

4. Wherefore, if I may not draw out of the fullness of the fountain, nor drink to satiety, I will at least set my mouth to the orifice of this heavenly pipe, that so I may draw thence some little drop to allay my thirst, and may not wholly wither away.

And if as yet I cannot be all heavenly and all on fire, like the Cherubim and Seraphim, I will still endeavour to follow after devotion and prepare my heart, that so I may acquire some small spark of divine fire by humbly receiving this life-giving Sacrament.

And whatever is wanting to me, O good Jesus, most holy Saviour, do Thou in Thy bounty and goodness supply for me, who hast vouchsafed to call all unto Thee, saying: Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.

5. I labour, indeed, in the sweat of my brow, I am tortured

with grief of heart, I am burdened with sins, I am troubled with temptations, I am entangled and oppressed with many evil passions; and there is no one to help me, no one to deliver and save me, but Thou, O Lord God, my Saviour, to whom I commit myself and all that is mine, that Thou mayest keep me and bring me to everlasting life.

Receive me, for the praise and glory of Thy Name, who hast prepared Thy Body and Blood for my food and drink.

Grant, O Lord God, my salvation, that, with the frequenting of this Thy Mystery, may increase the affection of my devotion.

Chapter V

On the Dignity of the Sacrament and of the Priestly State

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

If thou hadst the purity of an angel, and the sanctity of St John the Baptist, thou wouldst neither be worthy to receive nor to handle this Sacrament.

For this is not due to man's merits, that a man should consecrate and handle the Sacrament of Christ, and receive for food the bread of angels.

Great is the Mystery, and great the dignity of priests, to whom is given that which to the angels is not granted. For priests alone, rightly ordained in the Church, have the power of celebrating and consecrating the Body of Christ.

A priest, indeed, is the minister of God, using the word of God, by the command and institution of God; but God is there the principal Author and invisible Worker, to whom all whatsoever He willeth is subject, and all whatsoever He commandeth is obedient.

More oughtest thou, therefore, to credit God the Omnipotent, in this most excellent Sacrament, than thy own sense or any visible sign. And therefore thou oughtest to approach this work with fear and reverence.

Take heed to thyself, and see what kind of ministry has been delivered to thee by the imposition of the hands of the Bishop.

Behold, thou art made a Priest, and art consecrated to celebrate; see now that faithfully and devoutly, in due time, thou offer up Sacrifice to God, and that thou show thyself blameless.

Thou hast not lightened thy burden, but art now bound by a stricter bond of discipline, and art obliged to greater perfection of sanctity.

A priest ought to be adorned with all virtues, and set the example of a good life to others.

His conversation should not be with the popular and common ways of men, but with the angels in heaven, or with perfect men upon earth.

2. A priest, clad in sacred vestments, is Christ's vicegerent, that he may suppliantly and humbly pray to God for himself and all the people.

He hath before and behind him the sign of the Cross of our Lord, that he may ever remember the Passion of Christ.

Before him he beareth the Cross on the chasuble, that he may diligently behold the footsteps of Christ, and fervently endeavour to follow after them.

Behind him he is marked with the Cross, that he may mildly suffer for God's sake whatsoever adversities befall him from others.

He weareth the Cross before, that he may bewail his own sins; and behind, that, through compassion, he may lament the sins of others, and know that he is placed in the midst, between God and the sinner.

Neither ought he to grow weary of prayer and the holy Oblation, until he deserve to obtain grace and mercy.

When a priest celebrateth, he honoureth God, he rejoiceth the angels, he edifieth the Church, he helpeth the living, he obtaineth rest for the departed, and maketh himself partaker of all good things.

Chapter VI

A Self-interrogation concerning the Exercise Proper before Communion

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

WHEN I consider Thy dignity, O Lord, and my own vileness, I am affrighted exceedingly, and am confounded within myself.

For if I do not appeal to Thee, I fly from life; and if I intrude myself unworthily, I incur Thy displeasure.

What, then, shall I do, O my God, my Helper and Counsellor in necessities?

2. Do Thou teach me the right way; set before me some short exercise suitable for the Holy Communion.

For it is well to know after what manner, indeed, I ought devoutly and reverently to prepare my heart for Thee, for the profitable receiving of Thy Sacrament, as well as for celebrating so great and divine a Sacrifice.

Chapter VII

On the Examination of our Own Conscience, and of a Resolution of Amendment

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

Above all things, it behoveth the Priest of God to come to the celebrating, handling, and receiving this Sacrament with the greatest humility of heart and lowly reverence; with a full faith, and a pious intention for the honour of God.

Examine diligently thy conscience, and, to the best of thy power, cleanse and purify it by a true contrition and humble confession; so that thou neither have nor know of anything weighty, which may give thee remorse and hinder thy free access.

Hold in displeasure all thy sins in general, and for daily excesses more especially grieve and lament.

And, if time admit, confess to God, in the secrecy of thy heart, all the miseries of thy passions.

2. Sigh and grieve that thou art still so carnal and worldly, so unmortified from thy passions.

So full of the motions of concupiscence; so unguarded in thy outward senses; so often entangled with many vain imaginations.

So much inclined to things exterior; so negligent of the interior.

So prone to laughter and dissipation; so hard to tears and compunction.

So inclined to relaxation and to the pleasures of the flesh; so sluggish in austerity and fervour.

So curious to hear news and see fine things; so remiss to embrace humiliation and abjection.

So covetous to possess much; so sparing in giving, so close in retaining.

So inconsiderate in talking; so unobservant of silence.

So disordered in thy manners; so overeager in thy actions.

So immoderate in food; so deaf to the Word of God.

So ready for repose; so slow to labour. So wakeful to hear idle tales; so drowsy at the sacred vigils.

So hasty to finish thy devotions; so wandering in attention.

So negligent in reciting the hours; so tepid in celebrating, dry in communicating.

So quickly distracted; so seldom fully recollected.

So suddenly moved to anger; so apt to take offence at others.

So prone to judge; so severe in reprehending.

So joyful in prosperity; so weak in adversity.

So often proposing many good things, and bringing so little to effect.

3. Having confessed and bewailed these and other thy defects with sorrow, and great displeasure at thy own weakness, make a strong resolution of always amending thy life, and of advancing for the better.

Then, with an entire resignation, and with thy whole will, offer thyself up to the honour of My Name, on the altar of thy heart, as a perpetual holocaust, faithfully committing to Me both thy soul and body.

That so thou mayest be worthy to approach to offer up sacrifice to God, and profitably to receive the Sacrament of My Body.

4. For there is no oblation more worthy, no satisfaction greater, for the washing away of sins, than to offer thyself purely and entirely to God, together with the Oblation of the Body of Christ in the Mass and in the Communion.

If a man does what lieth in him, and is truly penitent, as often as he shall approach to Me for pardon and grace, I live, saith the Lord, and I will not the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live; wherefore I will no longer remember his sins, but all shall be forgiven him.

Chapter VIII

Of the Oblation of Christ on the Cross, and of the Resignation of Ourselves

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

As I willingly offered Myself to God the Father for thy sins, with My hands stretched out upon the Cross, and My Body naked, so that nothing remained in Me which was not completely turned into a Sacrifice to appease the divine wrath; even so oughtest thou willingly to offer thyself to Me daily in the Mass, as intimately as thou canst, with thy whole energies and affections, for a pure and holy oblation.

What more do I require of thee, than that thou endeavour anew to resign thyself to Me?

Whatsoever thou givest except thyself, I regard not; I seek not thy gift, but thyself.

2. As it would not suffice thee, if thou hadst all things except Myself, so neither can it please Me, whatever thou givest, unless thou offer Me thyself.

Offer thyself to Me, and give thy whole self for God, and thy offering shall be accepted.

Behold, I offered my whole Self to the Father for thee; I have given My whole Body and Blood for thy food, that I might be all thine, and thou mightest be always Mine.

But if thou wilt stand upon self, and not offer thyself freely to My will, thy offering is not complete, nor will there be an entire union between us.

A spontaneous oblation of thyself into the hands of God ought to precede all thy works, if thou wouldst obtain liberty and grace.

For therefore is it that so few become illuminated and internally free, because they know not how entirely to renounce themselves.

My sentence standeth sure: Unless a man renounce all that he possesseth, he cannot be My disciple.

Thou, therefore, if thou desirest to be My disciple, offer up thyself to Me with all thy affections.

Chapter IX

That We must Offer Ourselves and all that is ours to God, and Pray for all

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

LORD, all things are Thine, that are in heaven and upon earth. I desire to offer up myself to Thee as a voluntary oblation and to remain for ever Thine.

Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, I offer myself to Thee this day, as Thy servant for evermore, for Thy homage, and for a sacrifice of perpetual praise.

Receive me with this sacred Oblation of Thy precious Body, which I offer to Thee this day in the invisible presence of assisting angels, that it may be for salvation unto me and all Thy people.

2. Lord, I offer to Thee all my sins and offences, which I have committed in Thy sight and that of Thy holy angels, from the day in which I was first capable of sin until this hour upon Thy altar of propitiation; that Thou mayest at the same time burn and consume them all with the fire of Thy charity, and mayest blot out all the stains of my sins, and cleanse my conscience from every fault, and restore unto me Thy grace, which by sin I have lost, fully pardoning me all and mercifully receiving me to the kiss of peace.

3. What can I do for my sins but humbly confess and lament them, and incessantly implore Thy propitiation.

Hear me, I beseech Thee, in Thy mercy, when I stand before Thee, O my God.

All my sins are exceedingly displeasing to me; I will never commit them any more; but I am sorry for them, and will be sorry for them as long as I live, and am prepared to do penance and to make satisfaction to the utmost of my power.

Forgive, O my God, forgive me my sins, for the sake of Thy holy Name.

Save my soul, which Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood.

Behold, I commit myself to Thy mercy; I resign myself into Thy hands.

Deal with me according to Thy goodness, not according to my impiety and wickedness.

4. I offer also to Thee all my good works, though very few and imperfect, that Thou mayest amend and sanctify them; that Thou mayest have a pleasurable regard to them, and make them acceptable to Thee, and always make them tend to better; and mayest not the less conduct me, a slothful and unprofitable creature, to a blissful and glorious end.

5. I offer to Thee also all the pious desires of devout persons; the necessities of my parents, friends, brothers, sisters, and all those that are dear to me, and of all such as, for the love of Thee, have been benefactors to me or others, and who have desired and besought me to offer up prayers and Masses for themselves and all theirs, whether they are still living in the flesh or are already dead to this world, that they may all experience the assistance of Thy grace, the help of Thy consolation, protection from dangers, and deliverance from the punishment to come, and that, thus freed from all evils, they may joyfully pay to Thee a noble sacrifice of praise.

6. I offer up also to Thee prayers, and this Sacrifice of Propitiation, for them in particular who have in any way injured me, grieved me, or abused me, or have inflicted upon me any hurt or injury.

And for all those likewise whom I have at any time grieved, troubled, oppressed or scandalized, by words or deeds, knowingly or unknowingly, that it may please Thee to forgive us all our sins and mutual offences.

Take, O Lord, from our hearts all suspicion, indignation, anger, and contention, and whatever else may wound charity and lessen brotherly love.

Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on those that crave Thy mercy; give grace to the needy; and grant us so to live that we may be worthy to enjoy Thy grace, and that we may attain unto life everlasting. Amen.

Chapter X

That the Holy Communion is not lightly to be Forborne

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

THOU oughtest often to have recourse to the fountain of grace and of divine mercy, to the fountain of goodness and all purity, that thou mayest be healed of thy passions and vices, and mayest deserve to be made stronger and more vigilant against all the temptations and deceits of the devil.

The enemy, knowing the very great fruit and remedy contained in the Holy Communion, striveth by every method and occasion, as far as he is able, to withdraw and hinder faithful and devout persons from it.

2. For when some are disposed to prepare themselves for the Sacred Communion, they suffer the worst assaults and illusions of Satan.

The wicked spirit himself, as it is written in Job, cometh amongst the sons of God to trouble them with his accustomed malice, or to make them over-fearful and perplexed, that so he may diminish their devotion, or by his assault take away their faith, if haply they may altogether forbear Communion or approach with tepidity.

But not the least regard must be had to his wiles and suggestions, be they ever so shameful and abominable; but all such imaginations are to be turned back upon his own head.

The wretch must be contemned and scorned; nor is Holy Communion to be omitted on account of any assaults and commotions which he may awaken.

3. Oftentimes also a person is hindered by too great solicitude for having devotion, and a certain anxiety about making confession.

Follow herein the counsel of the wise, and lay aside all anxiety and scruple; for it impedeth the grace of God and destroyeth the devotion of the mind.

Abandon not the Holy Communion for every trifling perturbation and heaviness; but go quickly to confession and willingly forgive others all their offences.

And if thou hast offended anyone, humbly crave pardon, and God will readily forgive thee.

4. What doth it avail thee to delay for a longer time thy confession, or to put off the Holy Communion?

Purge thyself as soon as possible, spit out the poison quickly, make haste to take the remedy, and thou wilt find it better for thee than if thou hadst deferred it for a longer time.

If to-day thou lettest it alone for this cause, to-morrow, perhaps, some greater will fall out; and so thou mayest a long time be hindered from Communion, and become more unfit.

As quickly as thou canst, shake off present heaviness and sloth; for it is to no purpose to continue long in uneasiness, to pass a long time in unquietness, and for these daily impediments to withdraw thyself from the divine mysteries.

Yea, rather it is very hurtful to delay Communion long; for this usually bringeth a heavy slothfulness.

Alas, some tepid and lax persons readily take occasion to delay going to their confession, and desire that their Sacred Communion should be therefore deferred, lest they be obliged to give themselves to greater watchfulness.

5. Ah, how little charity and what slender devotion have they who so easily put off Holy Communion!

How happy is he, and how acceptable to God, who so liveth, and keepeth his conscience in such purity, as to be prepared and well disposed to communicate every day, were it permitted to him, and he might pass without observation!

If sometimes a person abstaineth, out of humility, or from some legitimate preventing cause, he is to be commended for reverence.

But if sloth creep in upon him, he must bestir himself, and do what lieth in him; and the Lord will quicken his desire according to his good will, which He chiefly regardeth.

6. And when, indeed, he is lawfully hindered, he should yet always have a good will and a pious intention of communicating, and so he will not be without the fruit of the Sacrament.

For every devout person may every day and every hour, without any prohibition, approach to a spiritual communion with Christ with much profit.

And yet on certain days, and at appointed times, he ought to receive sacramentally, with an affectionate reverence, the Body of his Redeemer, and rather aim at the praise and honour of God than seek his own consolation.

For as often as he communicateth mystically and is invisibly refreshed, so often doth he devoutly celebrate the Mystery of Christ's Incarnation and Passion, and is inflamed with His love.

7. But he who prepareth not himself otherwise than when a festival draweth near or when custom compelleth shall oftentimes be unprepared.

Blessed is he who offereth himself up as a holocaust to the Lord as often as he celebrateth or communicateth.

Be neither too slow nor too quick in celebrating, but observe the good common medium of those with whom thou livest.

Thou oughtest not to beget weariness or tedium in others; but keep the common way, according to the institution of Superiors, and rather accommodate thyself to the utility of others than follow thine own devotion and affection.

Chapter XI

That the Body of Christ and the Holy Scriptures are most Necessary to a Faithful Soul

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

O SWEETEST Lord Jesus, how great sweetness is that of a devout soul feasting with Thee in Thy banquet, in which there is no other meat set before her to be eaten but Thyself, her only beloved and most to be desired above all the desires of her heart!

And to me, indeed, it would be delightful, from my inmost affection, to pour out tears in Thy presence, and with loving Magdalen to wash Thy feet with my tears.

But where is this devotion, where is this so plenteous effusion of holy tears?

Of a truth, in Thy sight, and in that of Thy holy angels, my whole heart ought to be inflamed and weep for joy.

For I have Thee in the Sacrament truly present, though hidden under another species.

2. For to behold Thee in Thine own real and divine brightness, mine eyes could not endure, neither could the whole world subsist in the splendour of the glory of Thy Majesty.

In this, therefore, Thou consultest my weakness, that Thou concealest Thyself under the Sacrament.

I truly possess and adore Him whom the angels adore in heaven; I as yet awhile in faith, but they indeed by sight and without a veil.

I must be content with the light of true faith, and walk therein till the day of eternal brightness break forth, and the shadows of figures shall have passed away.

But when that which is perfect shall come, the use of sacraments shall cease; for the blessed in heavenly glory need not the sacramental medicine.

For they rejoice without end in the presence of God, beholding face to face His glory; and transformed from brightness to brightness of the abyss of the Deity, they taste the Word of God

made flesh, as He was from the beginning, and remaineth forever.

3. When I call to mind these wonders, every spiritual comfort whatsoever becomes even tedious to me, because as long as I behold not my Lord openly in His glory I make no account of all that I see and hear in the world.

Thou art my witness, O God, that no one thing can comfort me, nor anything created give me rest, but only Thou, my God, whom I desire to contemplate for eternity.

But this is not possible, so long as I sojourn in this mortal life.

And therefore I must set myself to much patience, and submit myself to Thee in every desire.

For thus also Thy Saints, O Lord, who now exult with Thee in the kingdom of heaven, during life awaited in faith and much patience the advent of Thy glory.

What they believed, I believe; what they hoped, I hope for; and whither they are arrived, I trust that I also, through Thy grace, shall arrive.

In the meantime I will walk in faith, being strengthened by the examples of the Saints.

I shall have, moreover, for my consolation and a mirror of life, Thy holy Book and, above all these, Thy most holy Body for my special remedy and refuge.

4. For in this life I find there are two things especially necessary for me, without which this miserable life would be to me insupportable.

Whilst detained in the prison of this body I acknowledge that I need two things, viz. food and light.

Thou hast, therefore, given to me, weak as I am, Thy Sacred Body for the nourishment of my soul and body, and Thou hast set Thy Word as a light to my feet.

Without these two, I could not well live; for the Word of God is the light of my soul, and Thy Sacrament is the bread of life.

These also may be called the two tables, set on either side in the storehouse of Thy holy Church.

One is the table of the Holy Altar, having the holy bread—that is, the precious Body of Christ; the other is that of the Divine Law, containing holy doctrine, teaching a right faith, and leading most securely even to the interior of the veil, where is the Holy of Holies.

5. Thanks be to Thee, O Lord Jesus, Light of eternal Light,

for the table of holy doctrine, which Thou hast ministered to us, Thy servants, the Prophets and Apostles, and other teachers.

Thanks be to Thee, O Thou Creator and Redeemer of men, who, to manifest to the whole world Thy love, hast prepared a great supper, wherein Thou hast set before us to be eaten, not the typical lamb, but Thy most sacred Body and Blood, rejoicing all the faithful with Thy holy banquet, and inebriating them with the chalice of salvation, in which are all the delights of paradise; and the holy angels do feast with us, but with a more happy sweetness.

6. Oh, how great and honourable is the office of priests, to whom it is given to consecrate with sacred words the Lord of Majesty, to bless Him with their lips, to hold Him with their hands, to receive Him with their own mouths, and to administer Him to others!

Oh, how clean ought to be the hands, how pure the mouth, how holy the body, how immaculate the heart of the priest, into whom the Author of Purity so often enters!

From the mouth of a priest nothing but what is holy, no word but what is becoming and profitable ought to proceed, who so often receiveth the Sacrament of Christ.

7. Simple and chaste should be those eyes which are accustomed to behold the Body of Christ.

Pure and lifted up to heaven should be the hands which are used to handle the Creator of heaven and earth.

Unto priests especially it is said in the Law: Be ye holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy.

8. Let Thy grace, O God omnipotent, assist us, that we, who have undertaken the sacerdotal office, may be enabled to serve Thee worthily and devoutly, in all purity and with a good conscience.

And if we cannot live in so great innocence of life as we ought, grant us still duly to bewail the sins we have committed, and in the spirit of humility and the purpose of a good will to serve thee more fervently for the future.

Chapter XII

With how Great Diligence He who is to Communicate ought to Prepare Himself for Christ

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

I AM the Lover of purity and the Giver of all sanctity.
I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of My rest.
Make ready for me a large upper room furnished, and I will eat the Pasch with thee, together with My disciples.

If thou wilt have Me to come to thee and remain with thee, purge out the old leaven, and make clean the habitation of thy heart. Shut out the whole world and all the tumult of vices; sit as a sparrow solitary on the house top, and think of thy excesses in the bitterness of thy soul.

For every lover prepareth a place the best and most beautiful for her dearly beloved, since hereby is known the affection of the person entertaining the beloved.

2. Know, nevertheless, that thou canst not satisfy for this preparation by the merit of any action of thine, even shouldst thou prepare thyself thus for a whole year together, so as to think of nothing else.

But it is of My mere goodness and grace that thou art suffered to come to My table; as if a beggar should be invited to the banquet of a rich man, and he had nothing else to return him for his benefits but to humble himself and give him thanks.

Do, therefore, what lieth in thee, and do it diligently, not out of custom nor from necessity, but with fear, reverence, and affection, receive the Body of thy beloved Lord God, who vouchsafeth to come to thee.

I am He who hath invited thee; I have commanded it to be done; I will supply what is wanting to thee; come and receive Me.

3. When I bestow the grace of devotion, give thanks to thy God, not that thou art worthy, but because I have had compassion on thee.

If thou hast not devotion, but rather findest thyself dry, persist

in prayer, sigh and knock; nor desist until thou deservest to receive some crumb or drop of saving grace.

Thou hast need of Me, not I of thee.

Neither dost thou come to sanctify Me, but I come to sanctify and improve thee.

Thou comest that thou mayest be sanctified by Me and united to Me; that thou mayest receive new grace, and be incited anew to amendment.

Neglect not this grace, but prepare thy heart with all diligence, and bring in thither to thee thy Beloved.

4. But thou oughtest not only to prepare thyself for devotion before Communion, but also carefully to keep thyself therein after the reception of the Sacrament. Neither is watchfulness less required after than a devout preparation before; for strict guardianship afterwards is the best preparation for again obtaining a greater grace.

For a person is rendered much indisposed for this if he personally turn himself too eagerly after exterior consolation.

Beware of much talk; remain in secret and enjoy thy God; for thou hast Him whom all the world cannot take from thee.

I am He to whom thou oughtest to give thy whole self, so that henceforth thou mayest live not in thyself, but in Me and free from all solicitude.

Chapter XIII

That a Devout Soul ought to Desire, with the Whole Heart, to be United to Christ in this Sacrament

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

WHO will give me, O Lord, to find Thee alone, to open my whole heart to Thee, and enjoy Thee as my soul desireth, and that no one may henceforth despise me, nor anything created move or regard me, but that Thou alone mayest speak to me, and I to Thee, as the beloved is wont to speak to his beloved, and a friend to be entertained with a friend.

For this I pray, this I desire, that I may be wholly united to Thee, and that I may withdraw my heart from all things created, and by Holy Communion, and often celebrating, I may more and more learn to relish things heavenly and eternal.

Ah, Lord God, when shall I be wholly united to and absorbed in Thee and altogether unmindful of myself?

Thou in me, and I in Thee; and thus grant us both equally to continue in one.

2. Verily, Thou art my Beloved, the choicest among thousands, in whom my soul is well pleased to dwell all the days of its life.

Verily, Thou art my Peace-maker, in whom is sovereign peace and true rest; and out of whom is labour and sorrow and infinite misery.

Thou art in truth a hidden God, and Thy counsel is not with the wicked, but Thy conversation is with the humble and the simple.

Oh, how sweet, O Lord, is Thy Spirit, who, to show Thy sweetness towards Thy children, vouchsafest to refresh them with that most delicious bread which cometh down from heaven.

Truly, no other nation is there so great, that hath its gods so nigh to it, as Thou, our God, art present to all Thy faithful, to whom, for their daily solace, and for raising up their hearts to heaven, Thou givest Thyself to be eaten and enjoyed.

3. For what other nation is there so distinguished as the Christian people?

Or what creature under heaven so beloved as a devout soul, to whom God cometh, that He may feed it with His own glorious flesh? O unspeakable grace! O wonderful condescension!

O boundless love, bestowed exclusively on man!

But what shall I render to the Lord for this grace, for charity so remarkable?

There is not anything, that I can present to Him more acceptable than to give up my heart entirely to God, and closely unite it to Him.

Then, all that is within me shall rejoice exceedingly, when my soul shall have been perfectly united to its God; then will He say to me: If thou wilt be with Me, I will be with thee; and I will answer Him: Vouchsafe, O Lord, to remain with me, I will willingly be with Thee.

This is my whole desire, that my heart may be united to Thee.

Chapter XIV

Of the Ardent Desire of Some Devout Persons towards the Body of Christ

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

Oh, how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee!

When I call to mind some persons devout to Thy Sacrament, O Lord, who approach with the greatest devotion and affection, then I am often confounded within myself, and blush that I approach so tepidly and coldly to Thy Altar, and to the Table of Holy Communion; that I remain so dry and without affection of heart; that I am not wholly set on fire in Thy presence, O my God, nor so vehemently drawn onwards and affected, as many devout persons have been, who, from excessive desire of Communion and a sensible love in their hearts, were unable to contain themselves from weeping; but with the mouth, both of their heart as well as of their body, did they, from the very marrow of their soul, pant after Thee, O God, the Living Fountain; not being otherwise able either to delay or satisfy their hunger, unless by receiving Thy Body with all joy and spiritual avidity.

2. Oh, truly the ardent faith of these persons is a demonstrative existing argument of Thy sacred presence!

For they truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread, whose heart burneth so mightily within them, from Jesus walking with them.

Alas, far from me too often is such affection and devotion, such vehement love and ardour.

Be Thou merciful to me, O good Jesus, sweet and gracious, and grant Thy poor mendicant to feel, sometimes at least, in the sacred Communion some little of the cordial affection of Thy love, that my faith may be more strengthened, my hope in Thy goodness increased; and that charity, once perfectly enkindled, and having tasted the manna of heaven, may never die away.

3. Powerful, indeed, is Thy mercy to give me also the desired

grace, and in Thy great clemency, when the time of Thy good pleasure arrives, to visit me with the spirit of fervour.

For though I burn not with so great desire as Thy specially devout servants, yet, by Thy grace, I have a desire of this same greatly inflamed desire, praying and wishing that I may be made partaker with all such fervent lovers, and be numbered in their holy company.

Chapter XV

The Grace of Devotion is Acquired by Humility and Self-abnegation

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

THOU oughtest to seek the grace of devotion earnestly, to ask it longingly, to wait for it patiently and confidently, to receive it thankfully, to keep it humbly, to work with it diligently, and to commit to God the time and manner of this heavenly visitation, until He come unto thee.

Thou oughtest especially to humble thyself, when thou feelest inwardly little or no devotion; and yet not to be too much dejected, nor to grieve inordinately.

God often giveth in one short moment, what He hath for a long time denied.

He giveth sometimes in the end that, which at the beginning of prayer He deferred to grant.

2. If grace were always immediately given, and ever present at our will, it would scarcely be supportable to weak man.

Therefore the grace of devotion must be awaited with a good hope and humble patience.

Still impute it to thyself and to thy sins, when it is not given, or when also it is secretly taken away.

A trifling matter is it sometimes that hindereth or hideth grace; if, indeed, that may be called trifling, and not rather important which hindered so great a good.

But if thou wilt remove this thing, small or great as it may be, and perfectly overcome it, it shall be as thou seekest.

3. For as soon as thou hast delivered thyself up to God with thy whole heart, and neither seekest this nor that for thine own pleasure or will, but wholly placest thyself in Him, thou shalt find thyself united to Him and at peace; for nothing will be so grateful to thee, and please thee so much, as the good pleasure of the Divine Will.

Whosoever, therefore, with simplicity of heart, shall raise up his intention to God, and disengage himself from all inordinate

love or dislike of any created being, he shall be the most apt to receive grace, and worthy of the gift of devotion.

For the Lord bestoweth His benediction there, where he findeth vessels empty.

And the more perfectly one forsaketh the things below, and the more he dies to himself by contempt of himself, the more speedily grace cometh, entereth in more plentifully, and the higher it elevateth a heart that is free.

4. Then shall he see and abound, and shall admire, and his heart shall be enlarged within him, because the hand of the Lord is with him, and he hath put himself wholly into His hand, even for ever.

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who seeketh God with his whole heart, and taketh not his soul in vain.

Such a one, in receiving the Holy Eucharist, obtaineth the great grace of Divine union; because he doth not regard his own devotion and consolation, but above all devotion and consolation he regardeth the honour and glory of God.

Chapter XVI

That We ought to lay open our Necessities to Christ and Crave His Grace

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

O most sweet and most loving Lord, whom I now desire with all devotion to receive, Thou knowest my infirmity and the necessity which I endure; under how great evils and vices I lie prostrate; how often I am oppressed, tempted, troubled, and defiled.

To Thee do I come for remedy, to Thee do I pray for consolation and relief; I speak to Him who knoweth all things, to whom my whole interior is manifest, and who alone can perfectly console and assist me.

Thou knowest what good things I stand most in need of, and how poor I am in virtues.

2. Behold, I stand before Thee, poor and naked, begging grace and imploring mercy.

Feed Thy hungry beggar, inflame my coldness with the fire of Thy love, enlighten my blindness with the brightness of Thy Presence.

Turn for me all earthly things into bitterness, all things grievous and adverse into patience, and all low and created things into contempt and oblivion.

Raise up my heart to Thee into heaven, and suffer me not to wander upon earth.

Mayest Thou alone be delightful to me henceforth and for evermore.

For Thou only art my meat and drink, my love and my joy, my sweetness and my whole good.

3. Oh, that with Thy Presence Thou wouldst totally inflame, consume, and transform me into Thyself, that I may be made one spirit with Thee by the grace of internal union, and by the melting of ardent love!

Suffer me not to go from Thee hungry and dry; but deal with me in Thy Mercy, as Thou hast often dealt so wonderfully with Thy Saints.

What marvel if I should be wholly set on fire by Thee, and should die to myself, since Thou art a fire always burning and never failing, a love purifying hearts and enlightening the understanding!

Chapter XVII

Of an Ardent Love and Vehement Desire to Receive Christ

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

WITH great devotion and ardent love, with all affection and fervour of heart, I desire to receive Thee, O Lord, as many Saints and devout persons, who were most pleasing to Thee in holiness of life and in the most burning devotion, have desired Thee when they communicated.

O my God, Eternal Love, my whole good and never-ending happiness, I desire to receive Thee with the most vehement desire and most worthy reverence, that any of the Saints have ever had, or could experience.

2. And although I am unworthy to possess all those sentiments of devotion, nevertheless I offer Thee the whole affection of my heart, as though I alone had all those highly pleasing and inflamed desires.

Yet, whatever a pious mind can conceive and desire, all these with the greatest reverence and most inward fervour I present and offer Thee.

I desire to reserve nothing for myself, but freely and most willingly to immolate to Thee myself and all that is mine.

O Lord my God, my Creator and Redeemer, I desire to receive Thee this day with this affection, reverence, praise and honour, with such gratitude, worthiness and love, with such faith, hope and purity, as Thy most holy Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, received and desired Thee, when, to the angel announcing to her the Mystery of the Incarnation, she humbly and devoutly answered: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy word.

3. And as Thy blessed precursor, the most excellent amongst the Saints, John the Baptist, in Thy presence rejoicing, leapt through joy of the Holy Ghost, whilst he was yet enclosed in his mother's womb; and afterwards seeing JESUS walking among men, humbling himself exceedingly, with devout affection said: The friend of the Bridegroom, who standeth and heareth Him,

rejoiceth with joy for the voice of the Bridegroom; so I also wish to be inflamed with great and holy desires and to present myself to Thee from my whole heart.

Wherefore I here offer and present to Thee the joys of all devout hearts, their ardent affections, their ecstasies, supernatural illuminations and heavenly visions; together with all the virtues and praises that are or shall be celebrated by all creatures in heaven and earth, for myself and all such as have been recommended to my prayers; and thus by all Thou mayest be worthily praised and glorified forever.

4. Receive my vows, O Lord my God, and my desires of infinite praise and boundless blessing, which, according to the multitude of Thy unspeakable greatness, are most justly due to Thee.

These I render, and desire to render Thee every day and every moment of time; and I invite and entreat all the Heavenly Spirits, and all the Faithful, by prayers and affections, to render with me thanksgiving and praise.

5. Let all peoples, tribes, and tongues praise Thee, and magnify Thy holy and most sweet Name, with the highest jubilation and ardent devotion.

And may all, whoever reverently and devoutly celebrate Thy most high Sacrament, and receive it with full faith, at Thy hands deserve to find grace and mercy, and humbly to pray for me, a sinner.

And when they shall have obtained their wished-for devotion and blissful union, and shall retire from Thy sacred heavenly table, fully comforted and wonderfully refreshed, let them vouchsafe to remember poor me.

Chapter XVIII

That Man should not be a Curious Searcher into this Sacrament, but a Humble Follower of Christ, Submitting his Sense to Holy Faith

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

THOU must beware of curious and useless scrutiny into this most profound Sacrament, if thou wouldst not sink into the depth of doubt.

He that is a searcher of majesty, shall be overwhelmed by glory.

God is able to effect more than man is able to understand.

A pious and humble inquiry after truth is permitted, as it is always prepared to be instructed, and studieth to walk in the sound doctrine of the Fathers.

2. Blessed is that simplicity, which leaveth the difficult paths of questionings, and goeth on in the plain and sure path of God's commandments.

Many have lost devotion, whilst they would search into matters.

It is faith and an upright life that are required of thee; not the loftiness of intellect, nor diving deep into the Mysteries of God.

If thou dost neither understand nor comprehend those things which are beneath thee, how mayest thou comprehend such as are above thee?

Submit thyself to God, and humble thy sense to faith, and the light of knowledge shall be given thee, according as shall be advantageous and necessary for thee.

3. Some are grievously tempted concerning faith and the Sacrament; but this is not to be imputed to them, but rather to the enemy.

Be not thou anxious, nor stop to dispute with thy thoughts, nor answer doubts which the Devil suggests; but believe the words of God, believe His Saints and Prophets, and the wicked enemy will fly from thee.

It is often very profitable that the servant of God should suffer such things.

For the Devil tempteth not unbelievers and sinners, whom he already surely possesseth; but the faithful and devout he tempteth and molesteth in many ways.

4. Go forward, therefore, with a simple and undoubting faith, and with lowly reverence approach the Sacrament; and whatsoever thou art not able to understand, securely commit to God, the omnipotent.

God doth not deceive thee; but he is deceived, who trusteth too much to himself.

God walketh with the simple, revealeth Himself to the humble, and giveth understanding to little ones; He discloseth His meaning to pure minds, and hideth His grace from the curious and proud.

Human reason is weak, and may be deceiving; but true faith cannot be deceived.

5. All reason and natural investigation ought to follow, and not precede or infringe upon it.

For faith and love are here most especially predominant, and operate by occult ways in the most holy and super-excelling Sacrament.

God, the eternal and immense, and of power infinite, doth things great and inscrutable in heaven and in earth; and there is no searching out His wonderful works.

If the works of God were such that they could easily be comprehended by human reason, they could neither be called wonderful or unspeakable.

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